I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow

BY SHUNJU AONO

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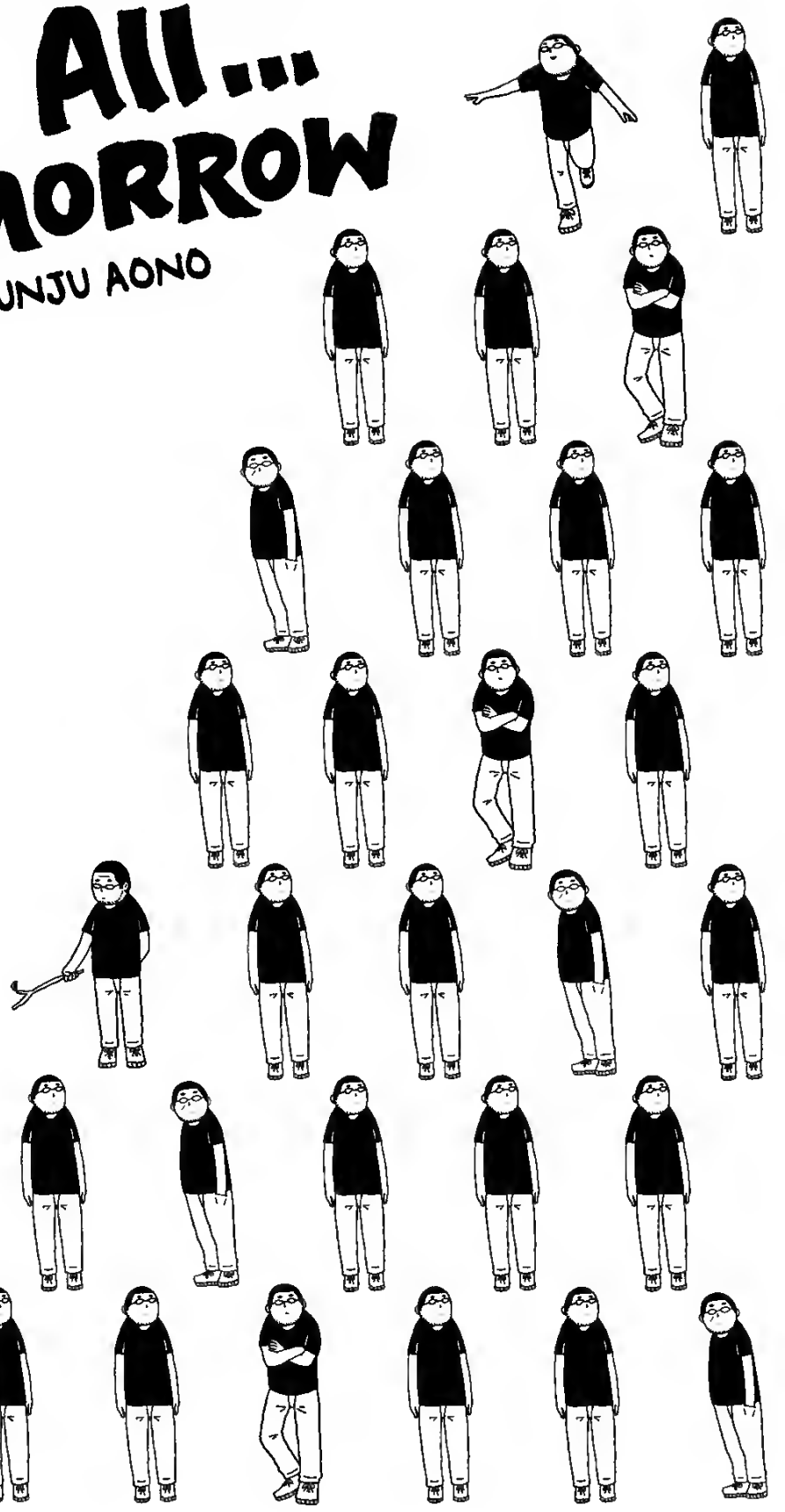
I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow

BY SHUNJU AONO



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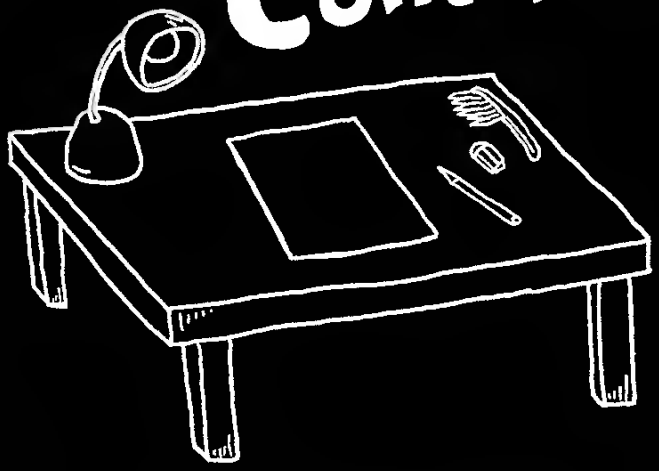

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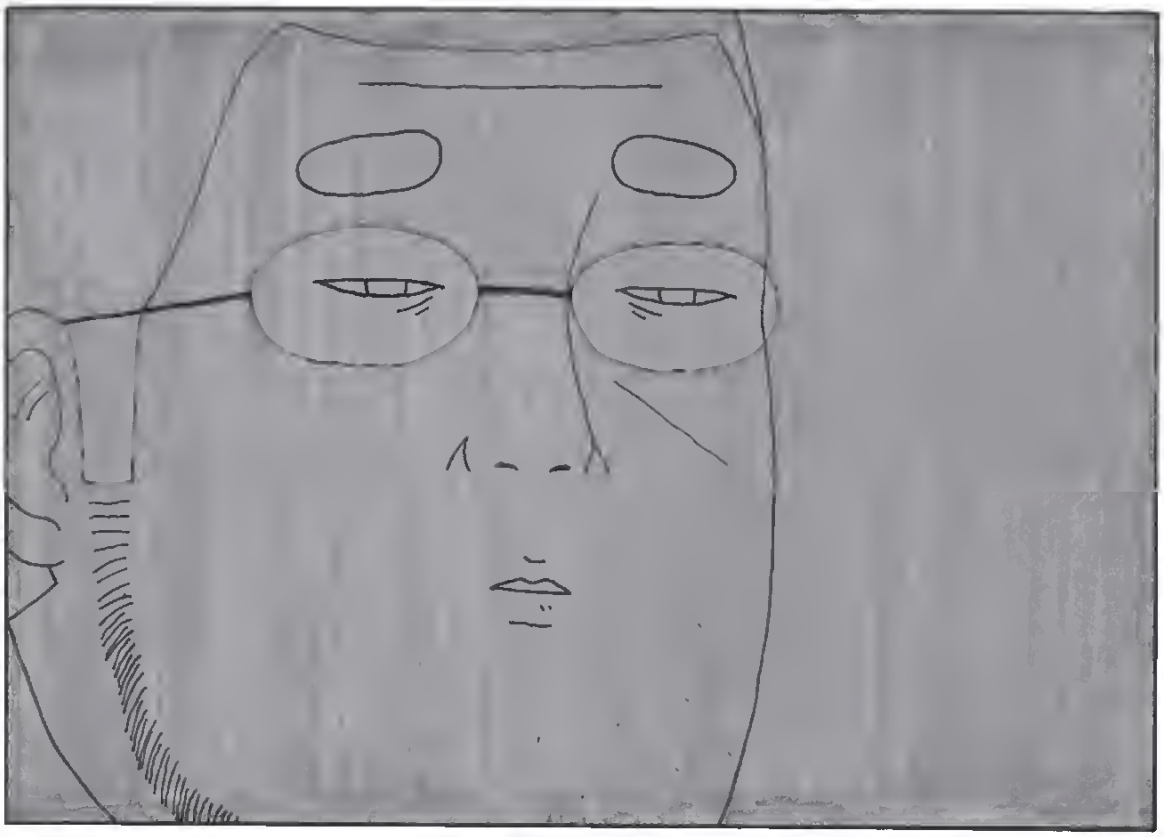
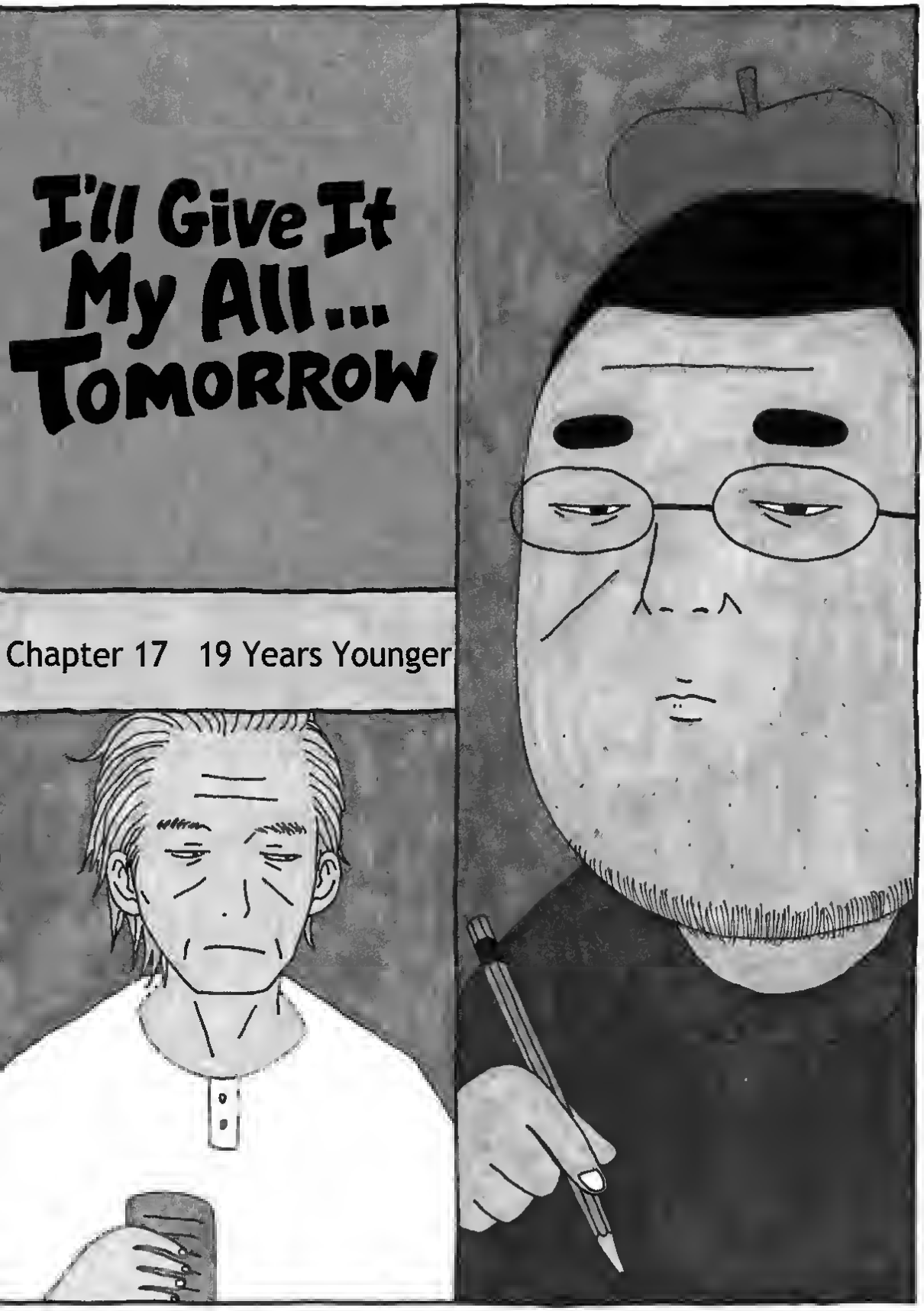
MURAKAMI DOESN'T WORK HERE ANYMORE...

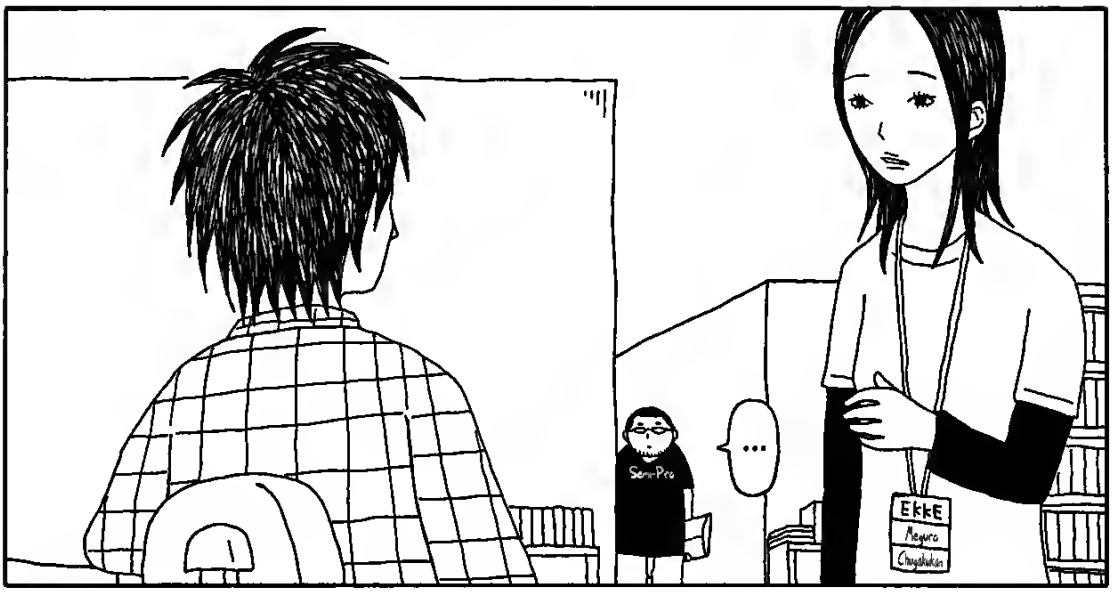


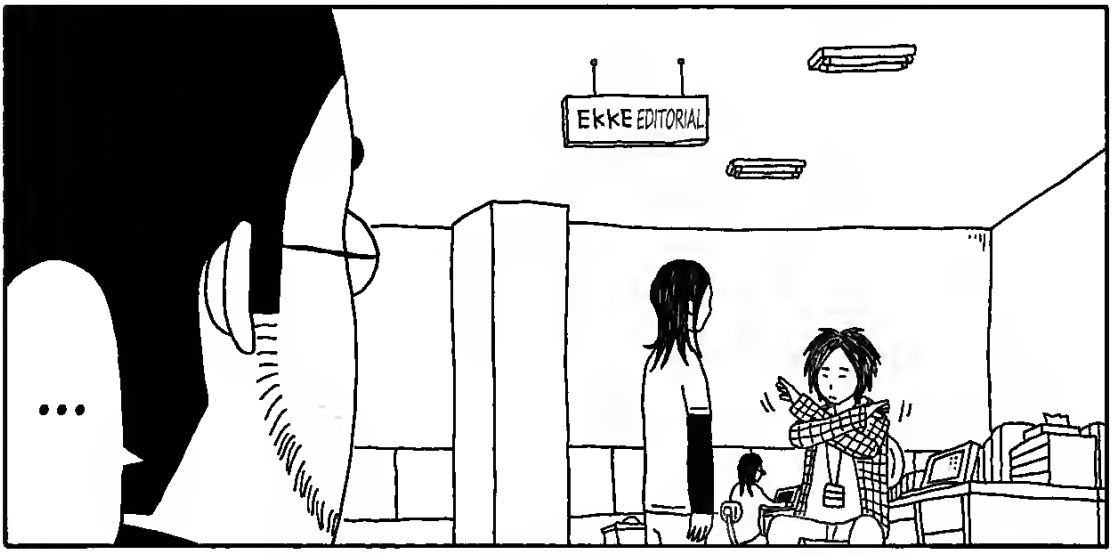
Chapter 17: 19 Years Younger

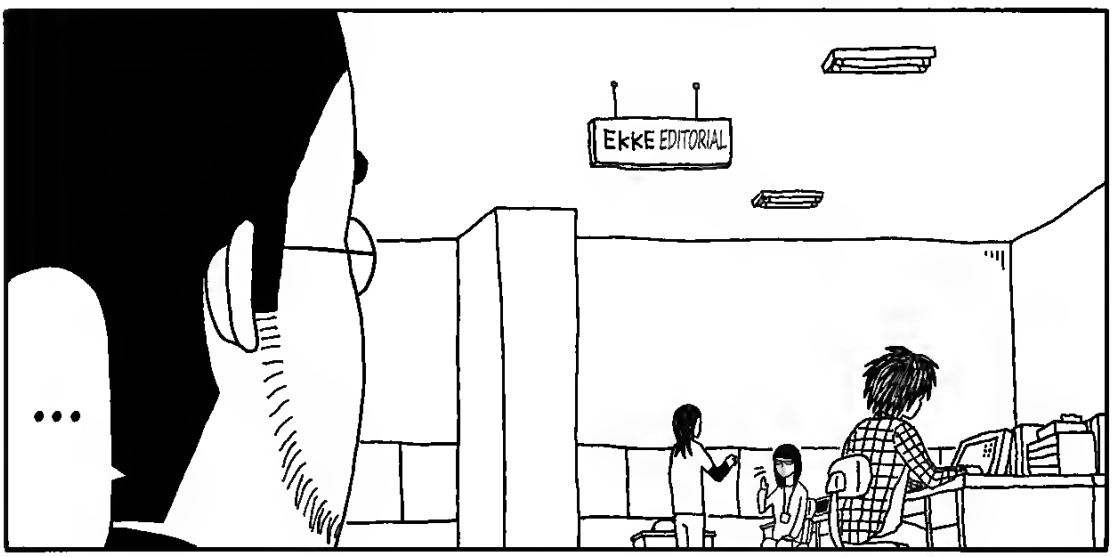

I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow
Chapter 17 19 Years Younger

Semi-Pro
...
NO ...
NOT A WORD ...
...YOU HADN'T HEARD, OGURO-SAN?
...
mutter mutter
HE QUIT ...

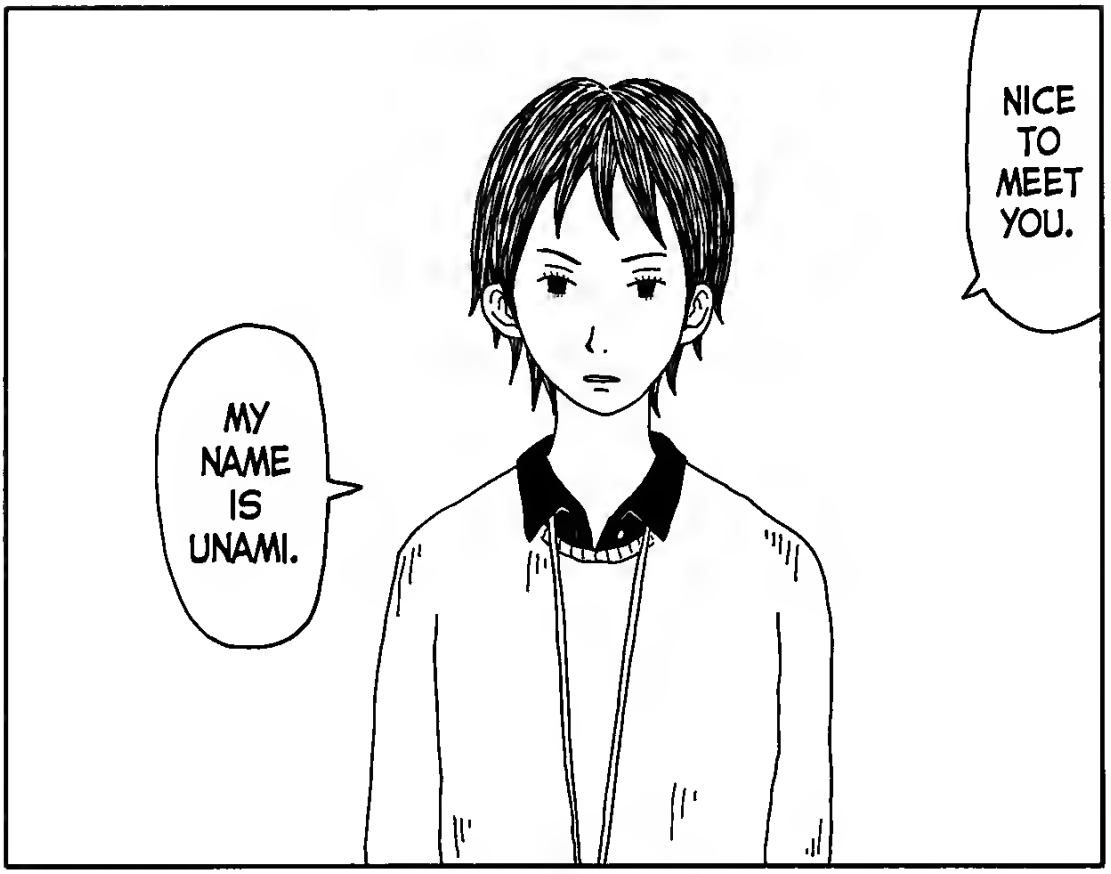
UMM ...
...
Monthly EKKE
mutter mutter
Semi-Pro
OF ALL THE CRAZY THINGS ...
?
...DO YOU WANT ME TO ASK AROUND FOR YOU?
MEGURO-SAN...
TO FIND YOU A NEW EDITOR...
EKKE EDITORIAL
PLEASE WAIT HERE FOR A MOMENT!
OKAY ...
...WHAT ABOUT YOU, MEGURO-SAN?
I'LL TRY ASKING AROUND. MAYBE THERE'S SOMEONE WHO'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE YOU ON...

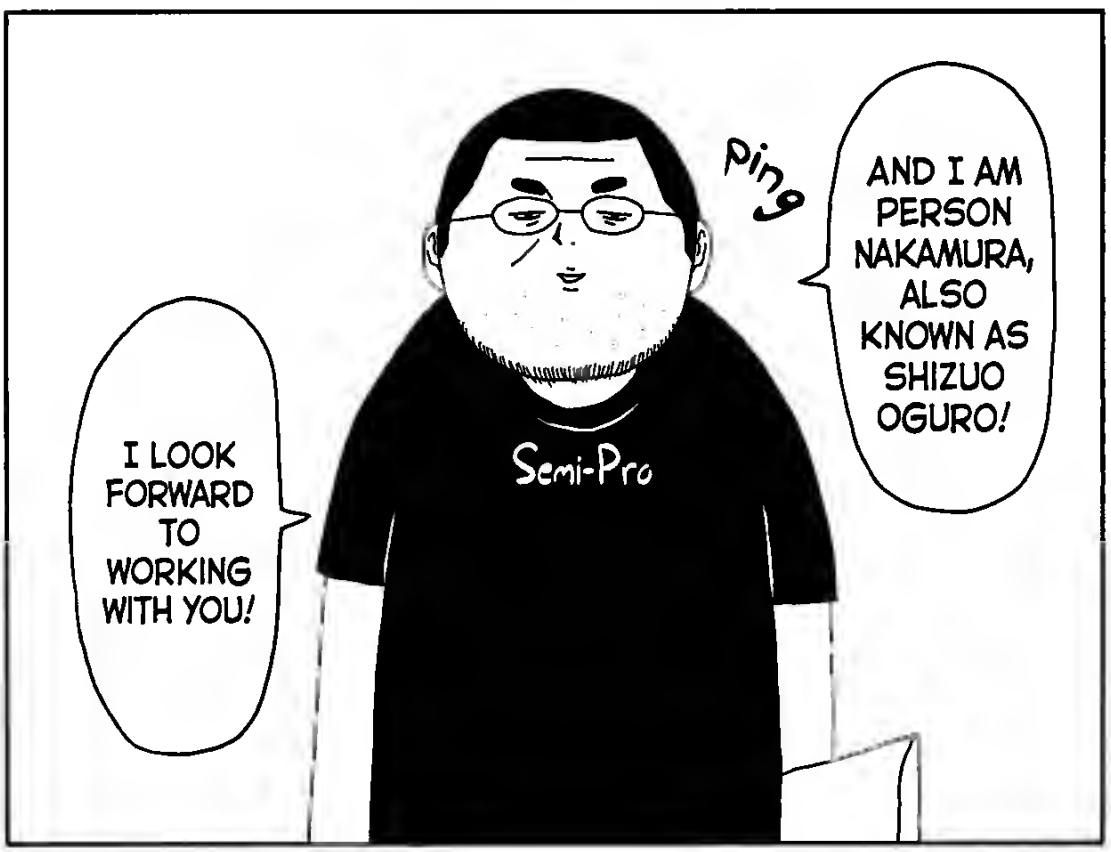

Semi-Pro
...
EKKE
Meguro
Chugakukin


EKKE EDITORIAL
...


EKKE EDITORIAL
...

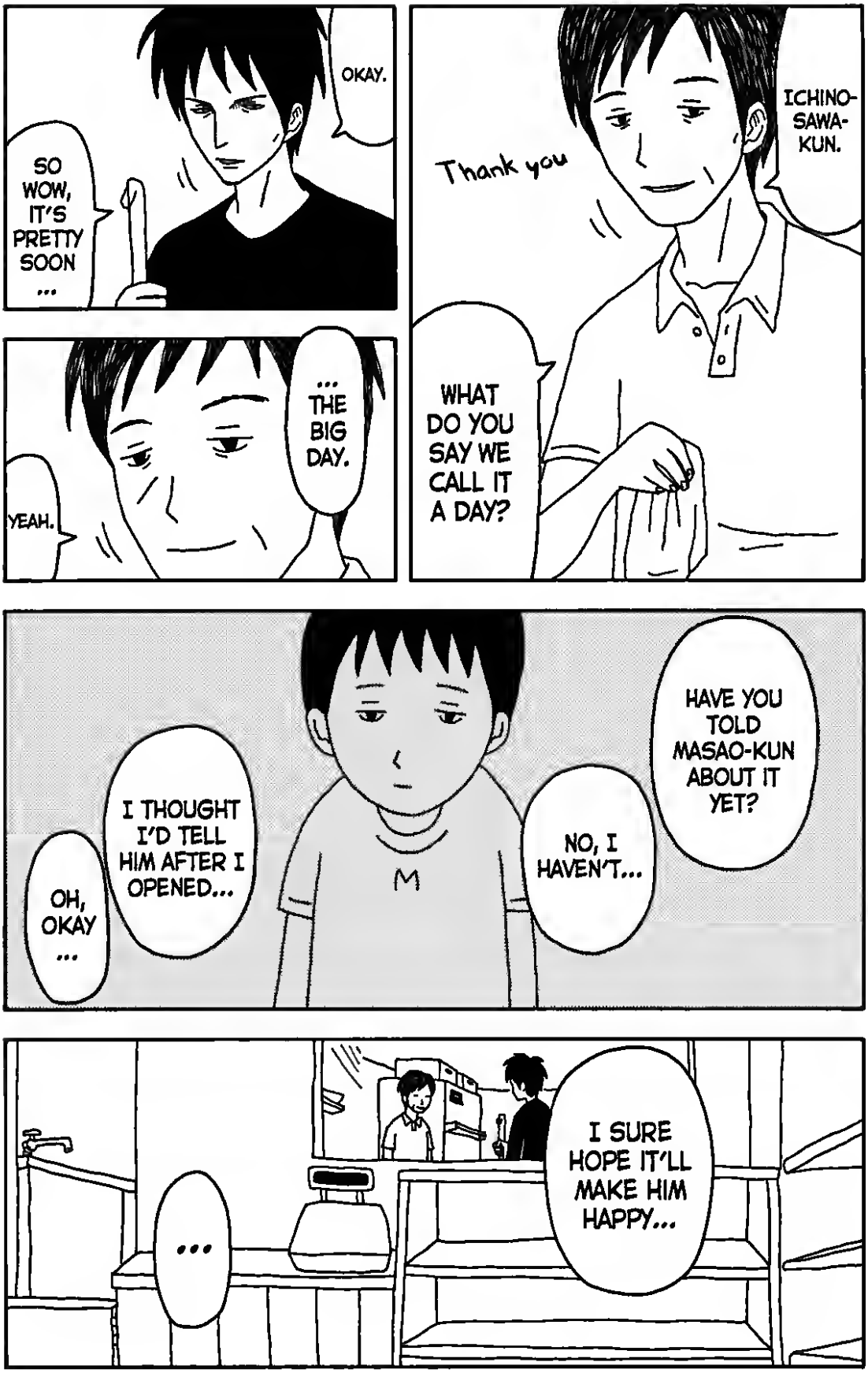
EDITORIAL
!
Flik
...
Smile
Semi-Pro
...
bow
...A
she!
MY COLLEAGUE HERE SAYS SHE'LL TAKE YOU ON!
...
dip
OGURO-SAN!

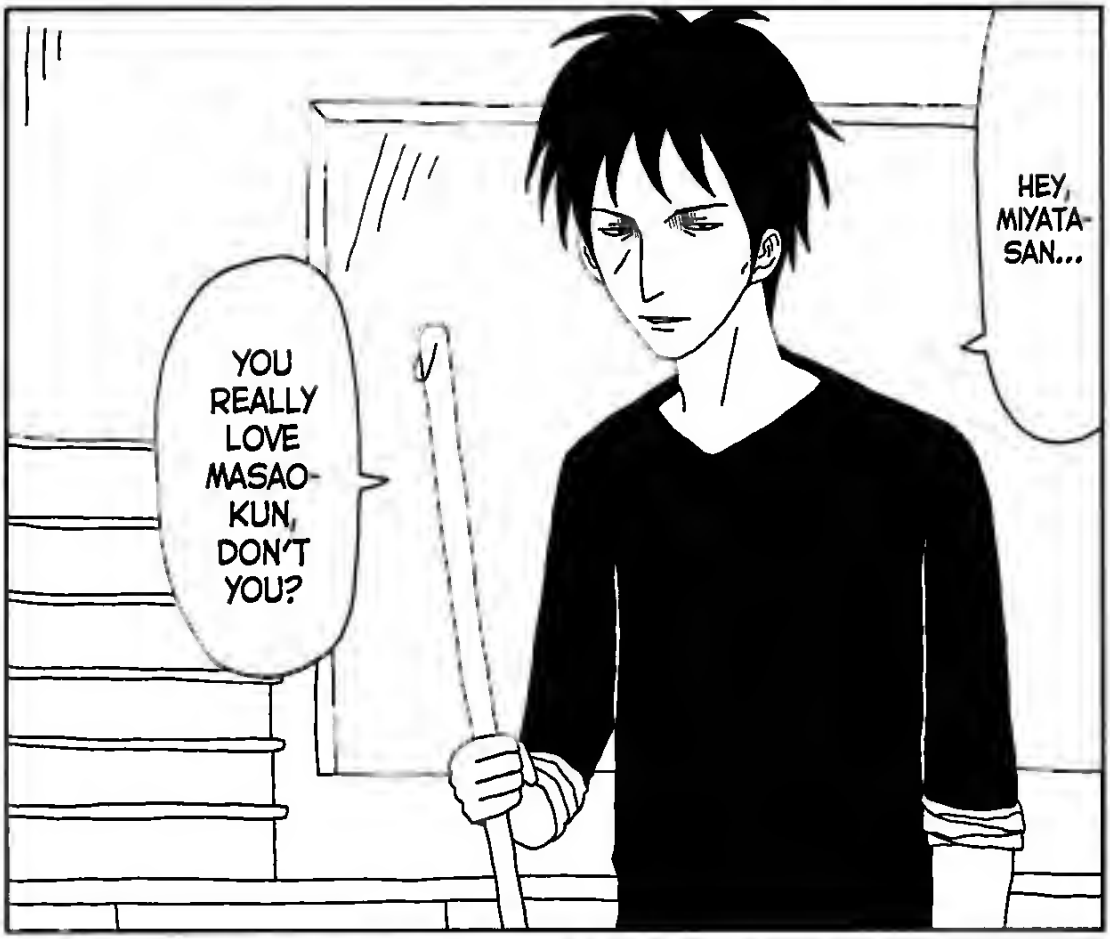

NICE TO MEET YOU.
MY NAME IS UNAMI.

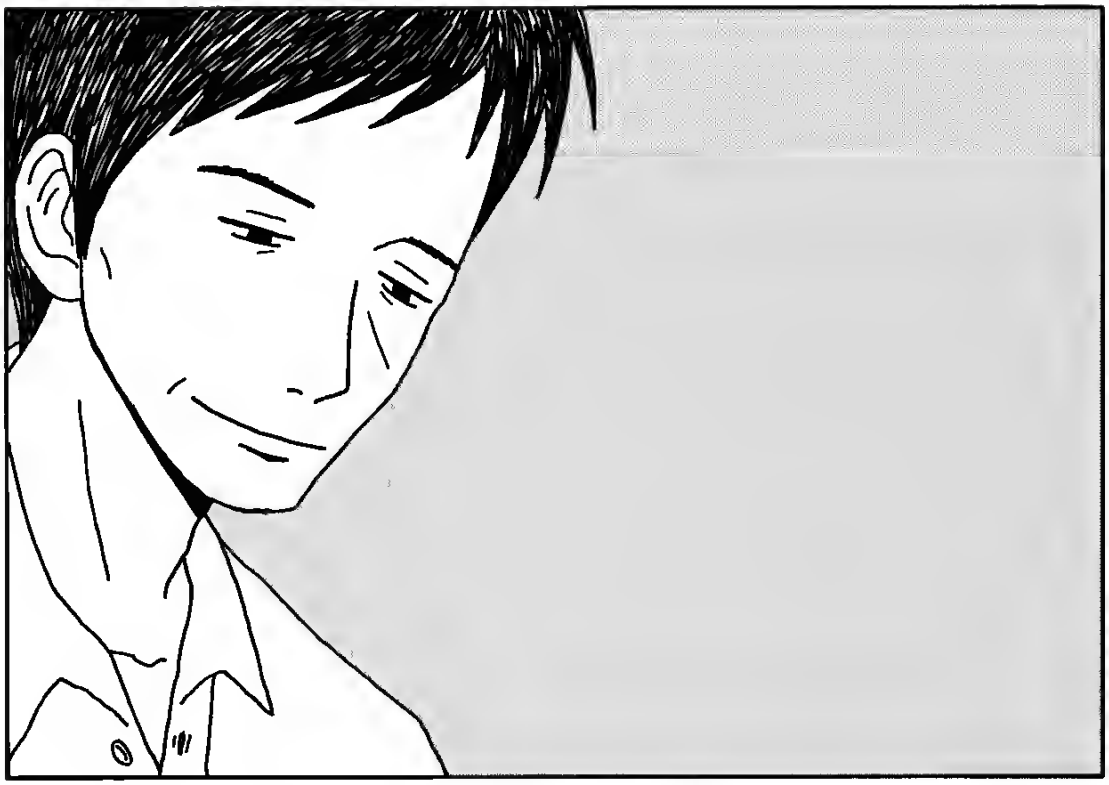

AND I AM PERSON NAKAMURA, ALSO KNOWN AS SHIZUO OGURO!
Ping
Semi-Pro
I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU!

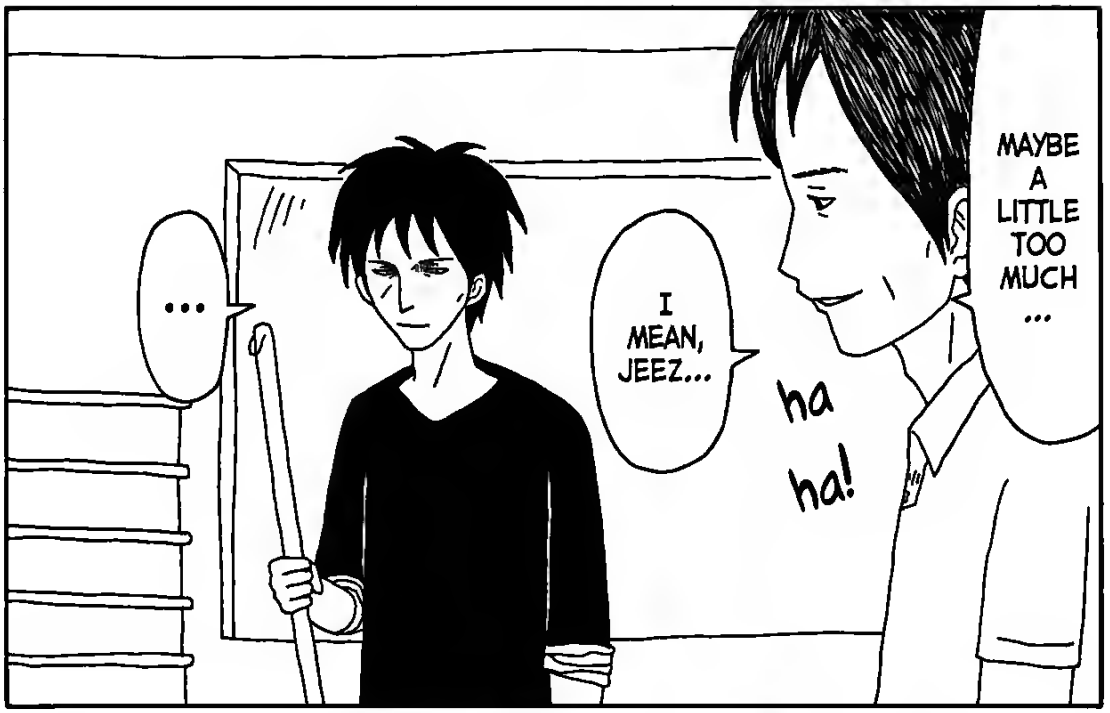
Curious about me?!
...THAT SHE'S BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT YOU FROM HER FIRST DAY HERE.
UNAMI ONLY JOINED EKKE THIS YEAR, BUT SHE WAS JUST TELLING ME...
...
HOW OLD ARE YOU, UNAMI-SAN?
Just for reference...
I'M 23...
TWENTY-THREE?! WELL, WELL...
So very young...
...
Hello, Unami-san!
Good-bye, Murakami.

yak
yak
hub
hub
Shopping Street
CHIRO
PRACTOR
Drugs Kawamata
AKI AMA STORE
skweek
skweek
skrub
skrub

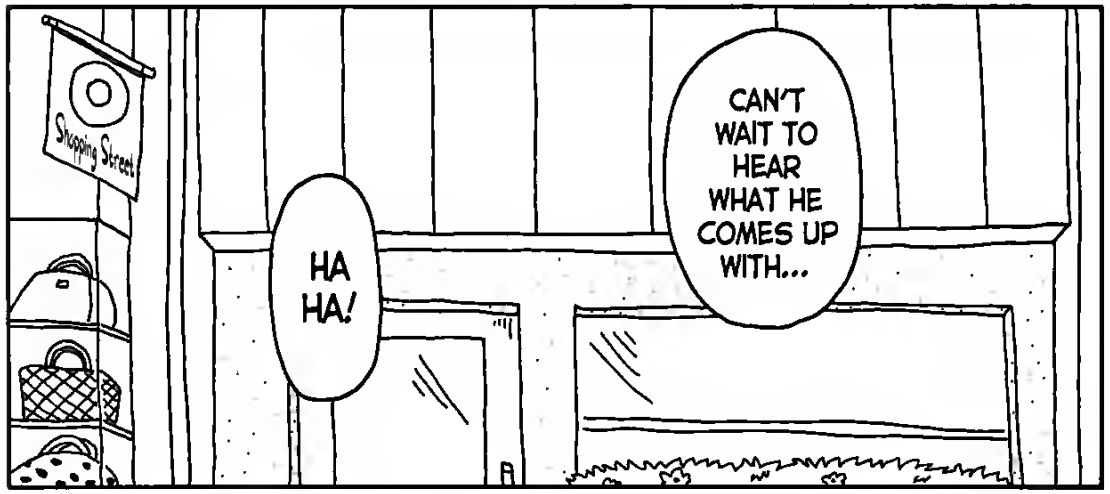

OKAY.
SO WOW, IT'S PRETTY SOON ...
ICHINO-SAWA-KUN.
Thank you
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE CALL IT A DAY?
... THE BIG DAY.
YEAH.
HAVE YOU TOLD MASAO-KUN ABOUT IT YET?
NO, I HAVEN'T...
I THOUGHT I'D TELL HIM AFTER I OPENED...
OH, OKAY ...
I SURE HOPE IT'LL MAKE HIM HAPPY...
...


HEY, MIYATA-SAN...
YOU REALLY LOVE MASAO-KUN, DON'T YOU?

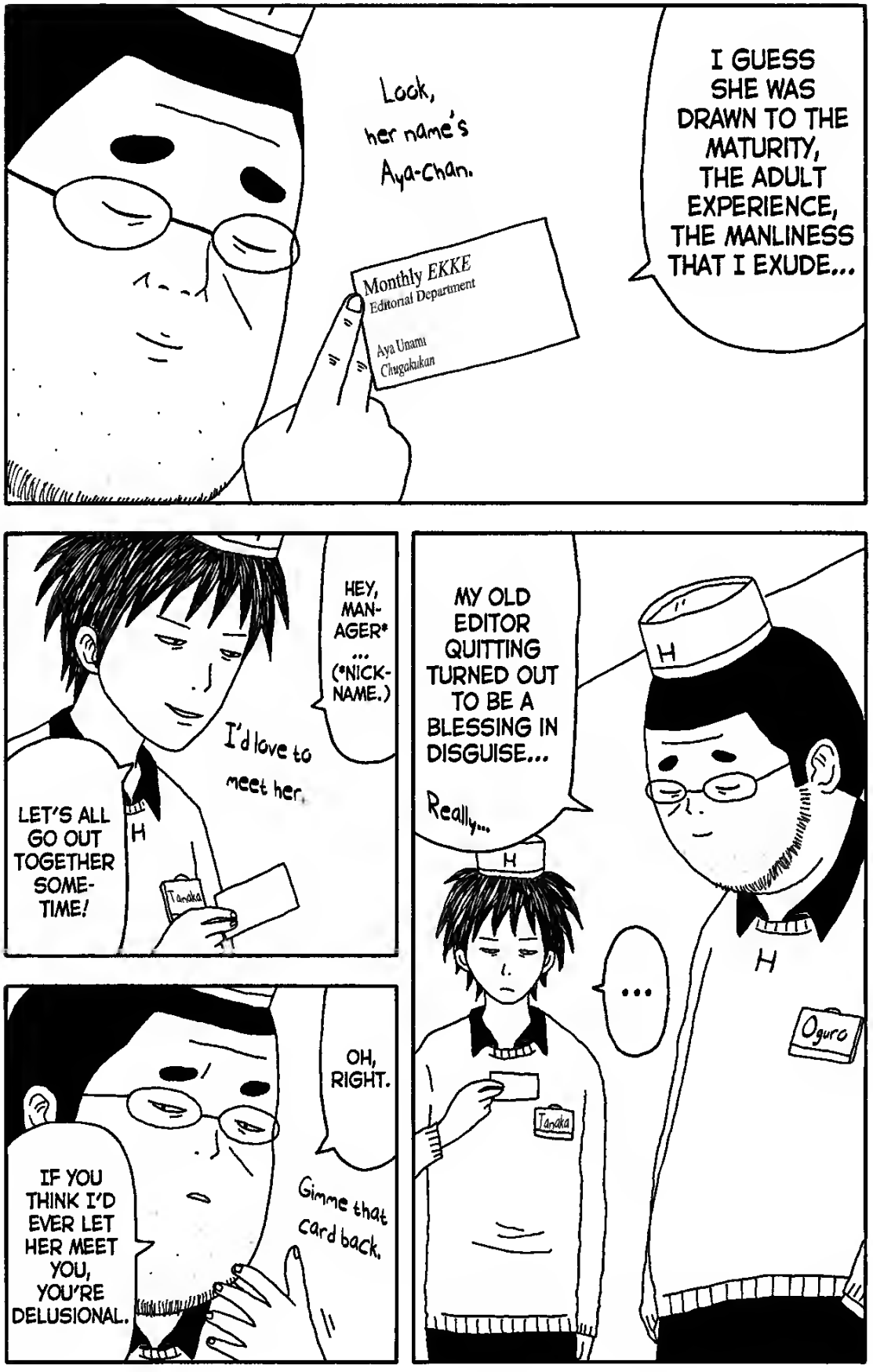


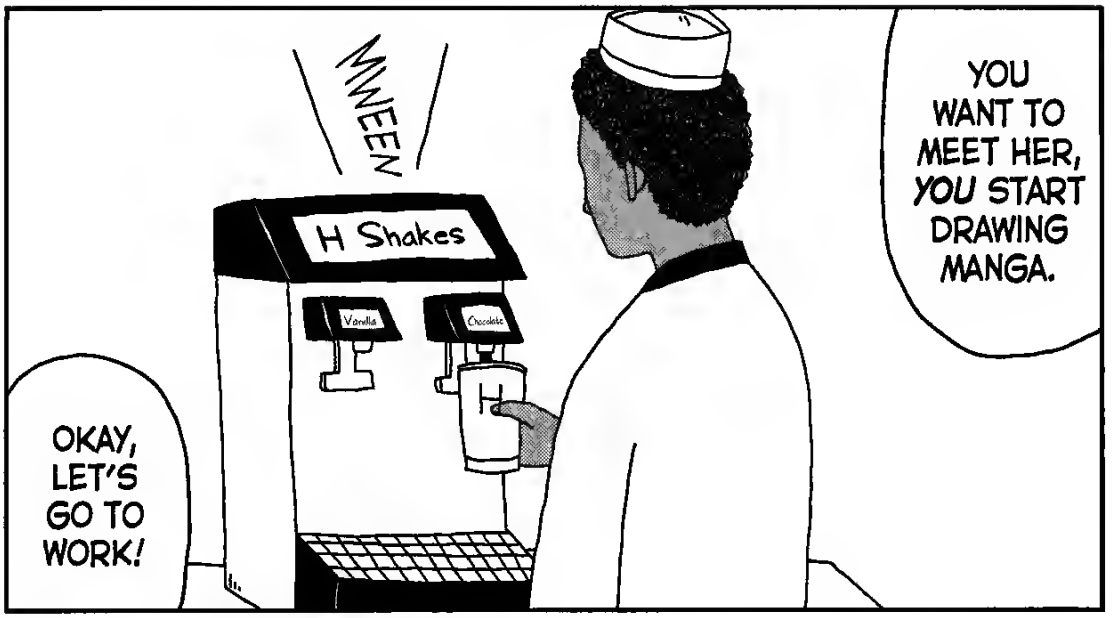

MAYBE A LITTLE TOO MUCH ...
ha ha!
I MEAN, JEEZ...
...

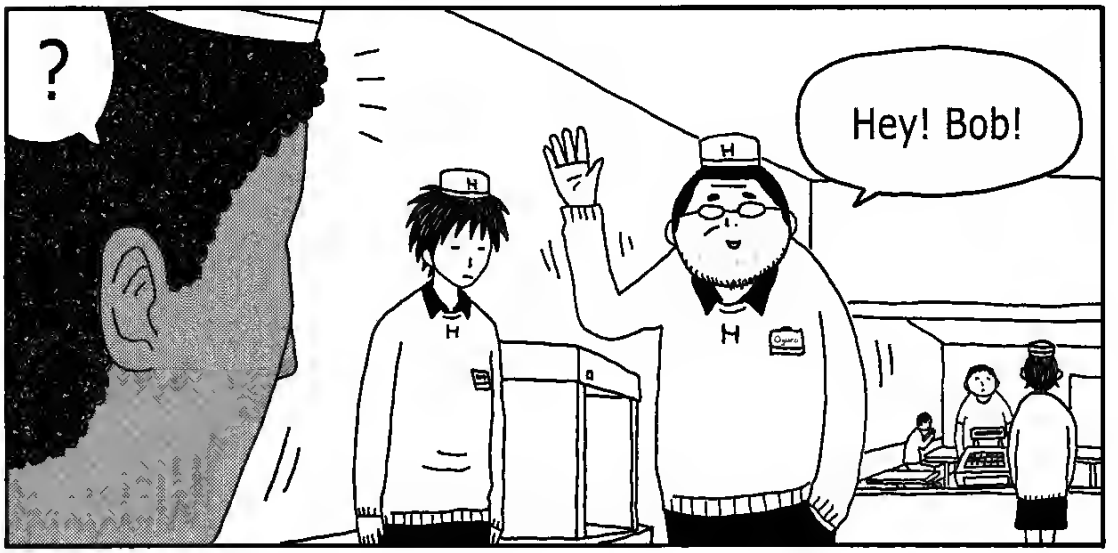
HEY, I WONDER IF OUR CONSULTANT'S COME UP WITH A NAME FOR THE PLACE YET.
Consultant
Leave it to me!
IT'S ABOUT TIME I ORDER THE SIGN, IF I WANT IT TO BE READY IN TIME...

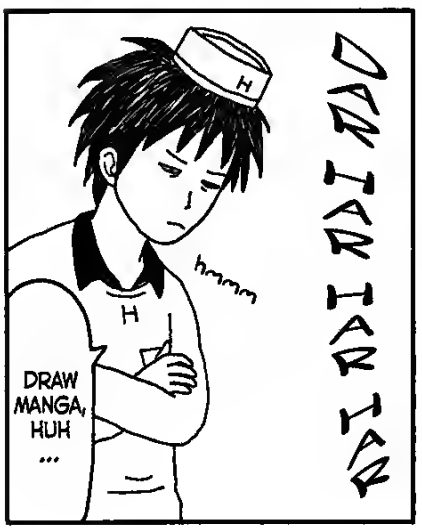

CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR WHAT HE COMES UP WITH...
HA HA!
Shopping Street

H Burgers
Burgers H
Burgers H
Now Hiring
H Burgers
JORIKU HOUSING
SHIKAKU
TWENTY-THREE?!
NOW, NOW, TANAKA MY FRIEND ...
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GOING TO START DATING HER, YOU KNOW ...
...yet.
I mean, 19 years younger...
SHE'S WAY TOO YOUNG FOR YOU.
THAT'S, LIKE, CRIMINAL ...
Tanaka
YEAH, RIGHT ...
THOUGH SHE'S BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT ME FROM WAY BACK, OR SO I HEAR.
LIKE, HOW ...?
THIS IS A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP, SEE. BUSINESS.


I GUESS SHE WAS DRAWN TO THE MATURITY, THE ADULT EXPERIENCE, THE MANLINESS THAT I EXUDE...
Look, her name's Aya-chan.
Monthly EKKE
Editorial Department
Aya Unami
Chugakukan
HEY, MANAGER* ... (*NICKNAME.)
I'd love to meet her.
LET'S ALL GO OUT TOGETHER SOMETIME!
Tanaka
MY OLD EDITOR QUITTING TURNED OUT TO BE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE...
Really...
...
Oguro
Tanaka
OH, RIGHT.
Gimme that card back.
IF YOU THINK I'D EVER LET HER MEET YOU, YOU'RE DELUSIONAL.

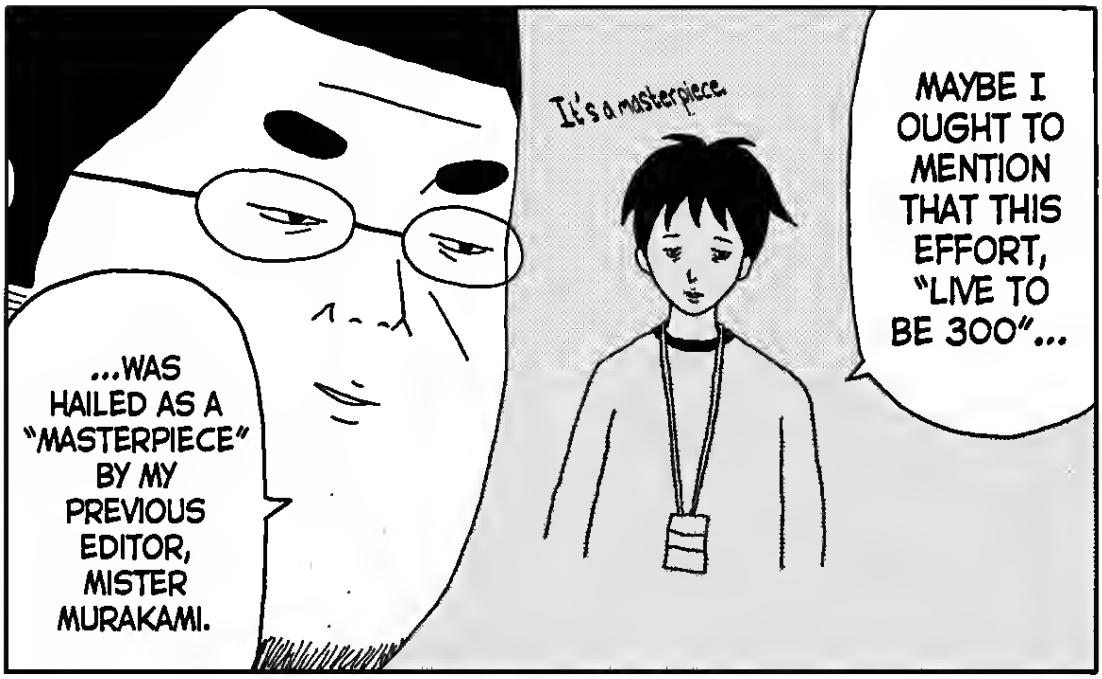

MWEEN
H Shakes
Vanilla
Chocolate
YOU WANT TO MEET HER, YOU START DRAWING MANGA.
OKAY, LET'S GO TO WORK!

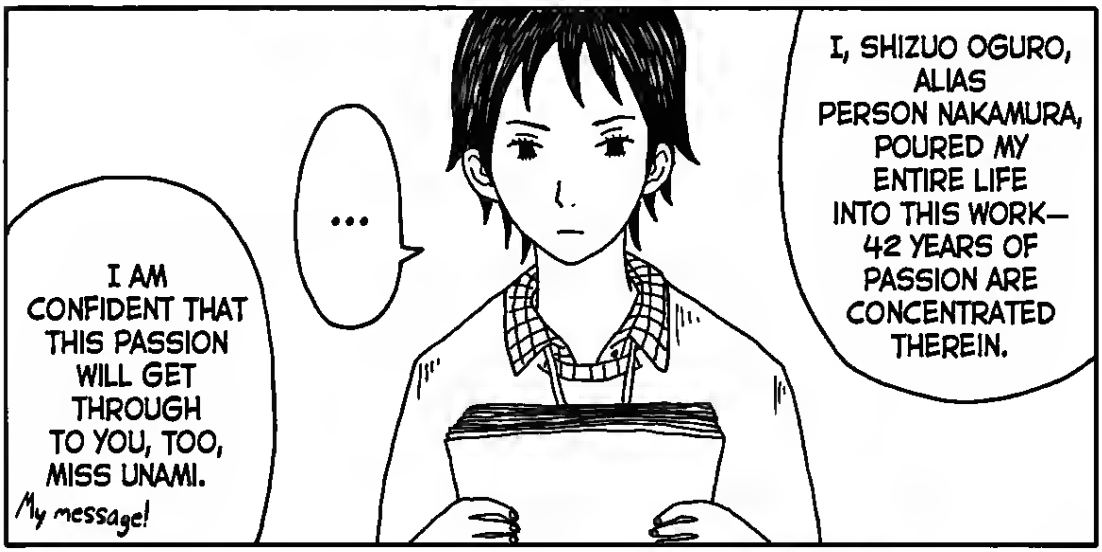

?
Hey! Bob!

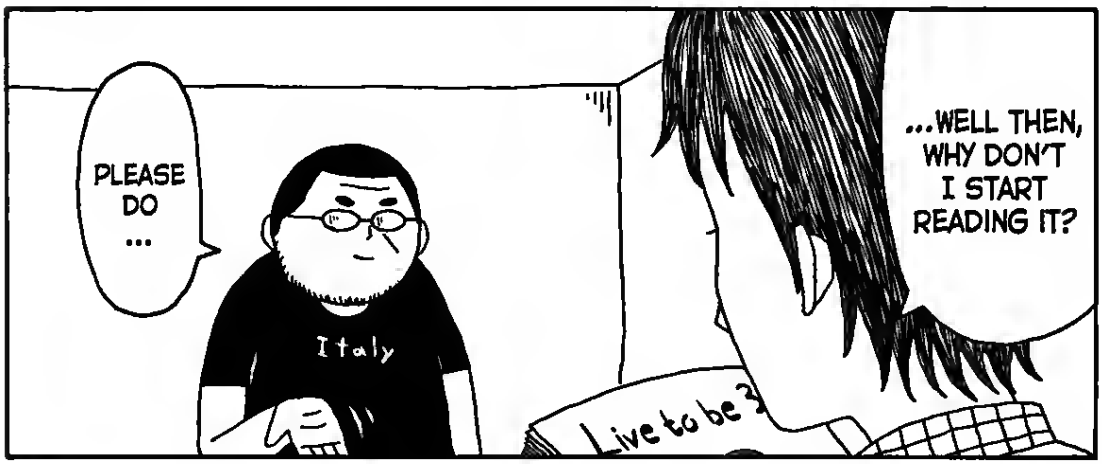

DRAWING IAR IAR
hmmm
DRAW MANGA, HUH ...

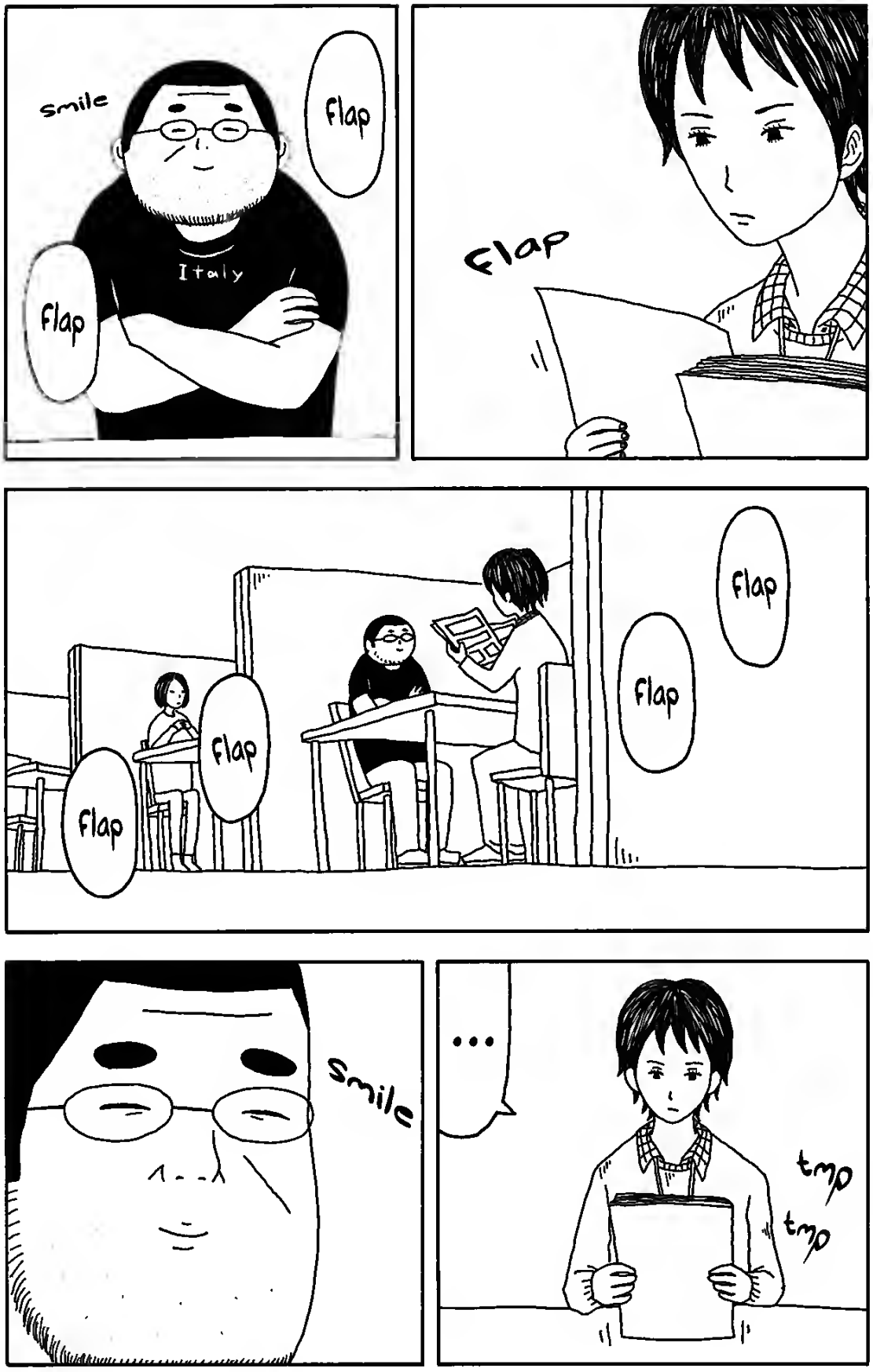
How are you?
...
Bob
H Shakes

kaw
kaw
CHU
GAKU
KAN
Live to be 300
THAT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.
dip
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME TODAY!
dip
SO, MISS UNAMI ...
Italy
Shup

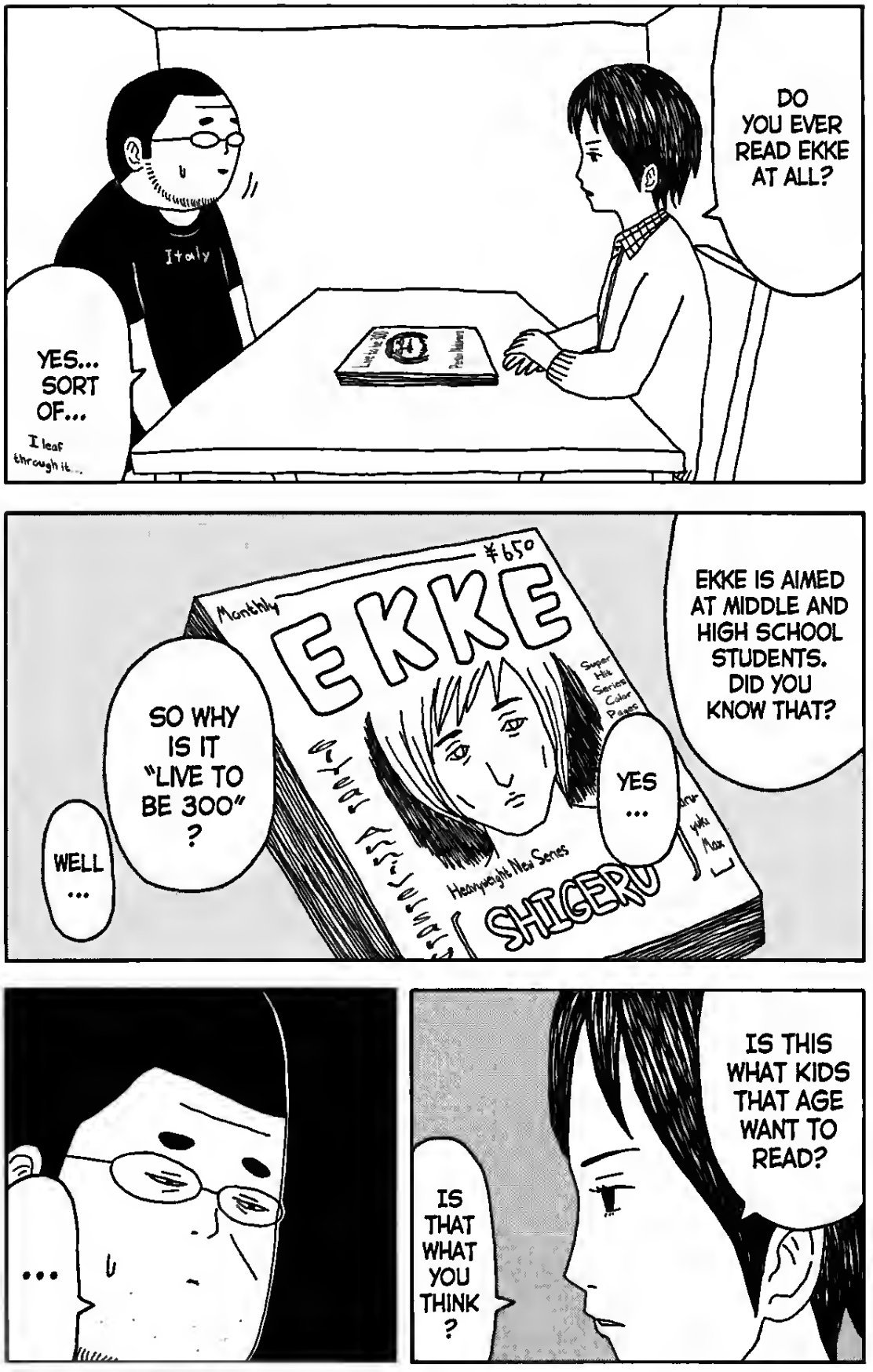

MAYBE I OUGHT TO MENTION THAT THIS EFFORT, "LIVE TO BE 300"...
It's a masterpiece.
...WAS HAILED AS A "MASTERPIECE" BY MY PREVIOUS EDITOR, MISTER MURAKAMI.


I, SHIZUO OGURO, ALIAS PERSON NAKAMURA, POURED MY ENTIRE LIFE INTO THIS WORK— 42 YEARS OF PASSION ARE CONCENTRATED THEREIN.
...
I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS PASSION WILL GET THROUGH TO YOU, TOO, MISS UNAMI.
My message!

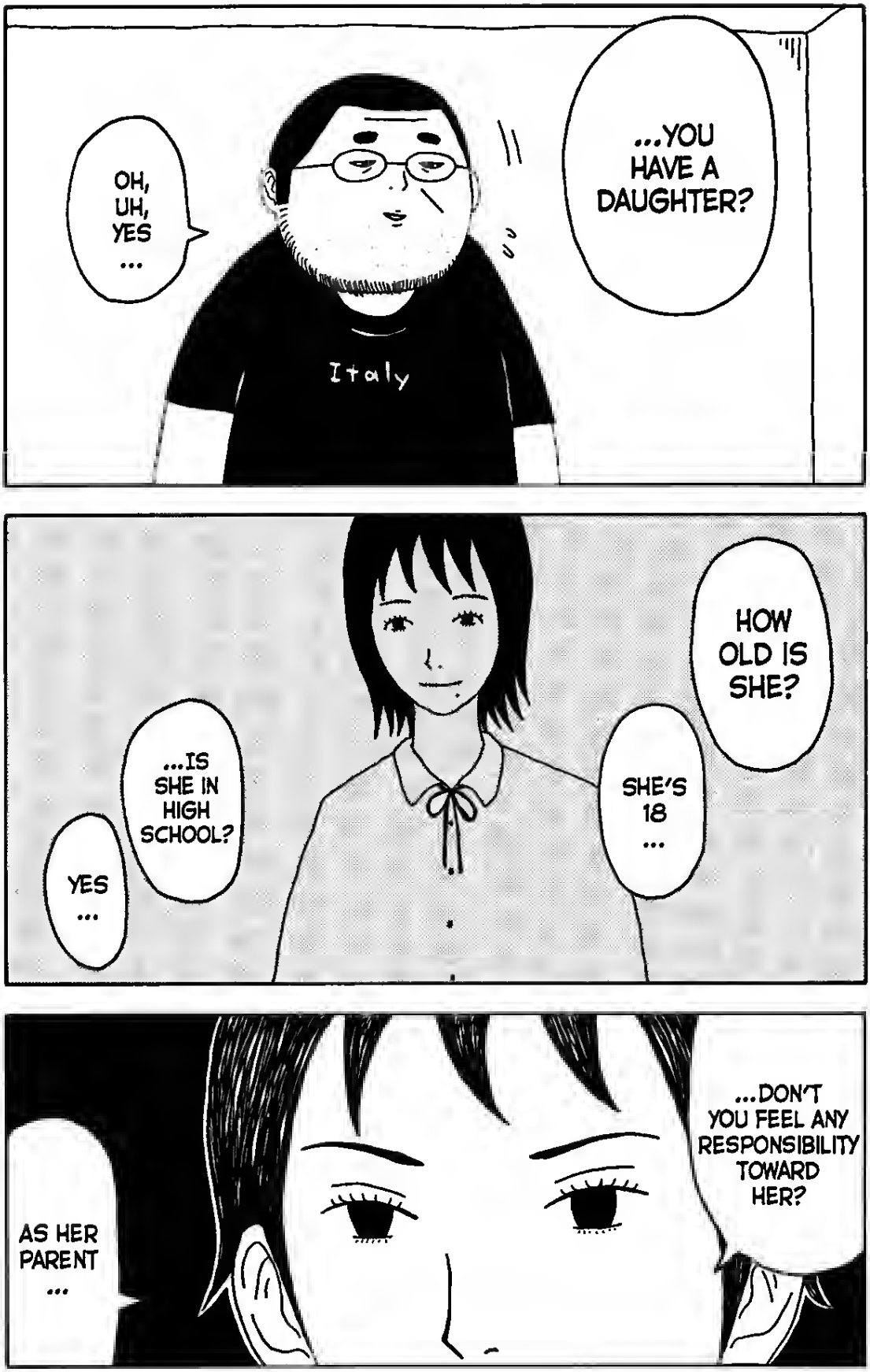

...WELL THEN, WHY DON'T I START READING IT?
PLEASE DO ...
Italy
Live to be 3


smile
Flap
Italy
Flap
Flap
Flap
Flap
Flap
Flap
smile
...
tmp
tmp

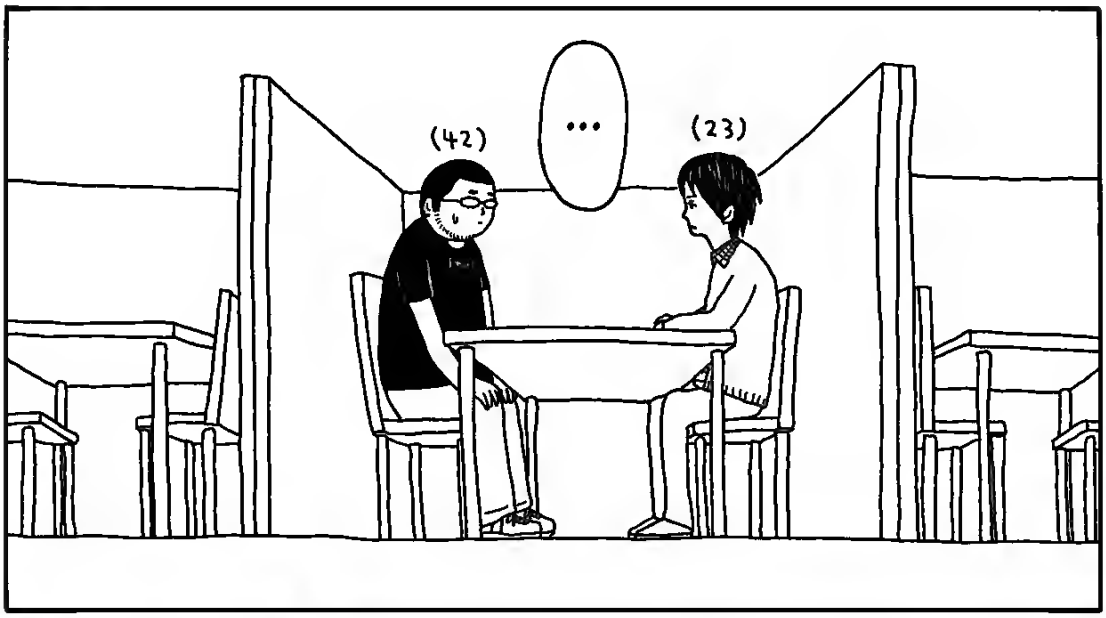
WHAT IS THIS?
HUH?
OGURO-SAN...
YES ...
...
Italy


DO YOU EVER READ EKKE AT ALL?
Italy
YES... SORT OF...
I leaf through it...
EKKE
Monthly
¥650
Super Hit Series Color Pages
Heavyweight New Series
SHIGERU
EKKE IS AIMED AT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. DID YOU KNOW THAT?
YES ...
SO WHY IS IT "LIVE TO BE 300" ?
WELL ...
...
IS THIS WHAT KIDS THAT AGE WANT TO READ?
IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK ?

...
...IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS NOW, HASN'T IT?
...YOU'VE BEEN TRYING VERY HARD FOR TWO YEARS, IS THAT CORRECT?
YES ...
I'm going to be a manga artist! (40)
FIGURE
THAT YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET PUBLISHED ...
YES ...
...
Italy
PUT ANOTHER WAY, YOU HAVEN'T MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN TWO YEARS, HAVE YOU?


...YOU HAVE A DAUGHTER?
OH, UH, YES ...
Italy
HOW OLD IS SHE?
SHE'S 18 ...
...IS SHE IN HIGH SCHOOL?
YES ...
...DON'T YOU FEEL ANY RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HER?
AS HER PARENT ...

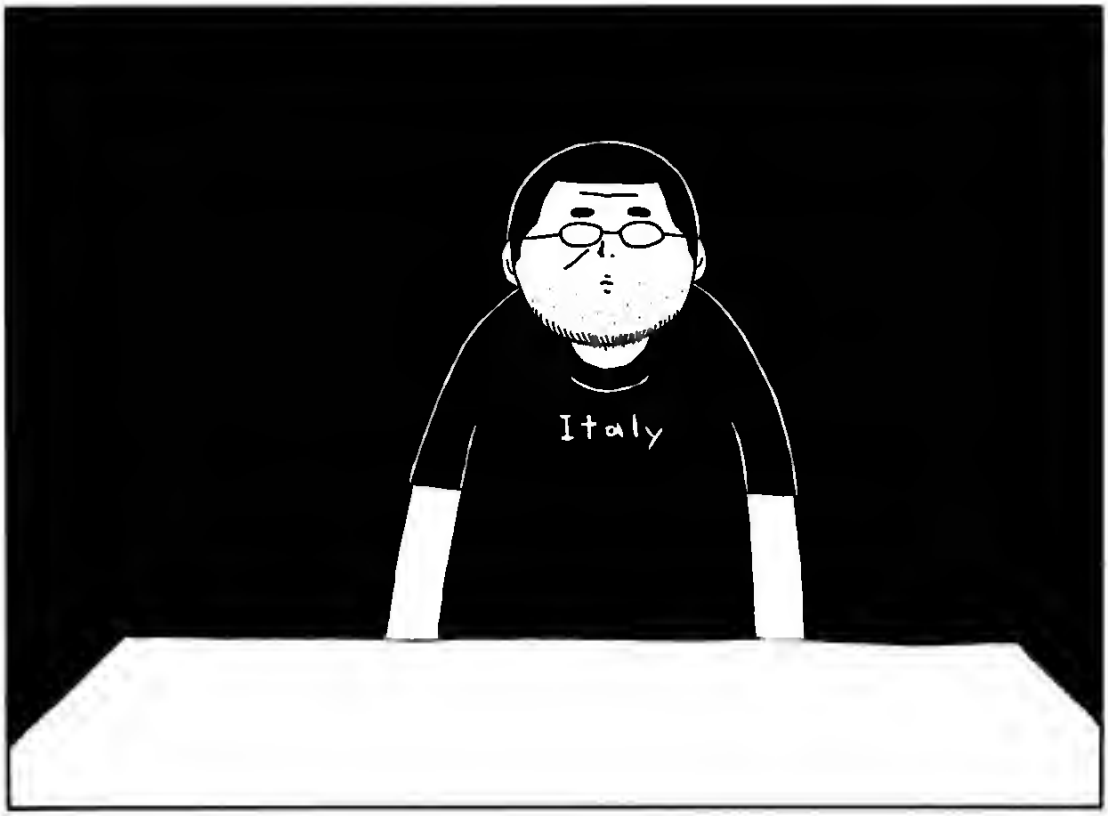
I THINK YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP.


(42)
...
(23)

I'M SORRY IF I WENT TOO FAR...
...
OH, NO ...

BUT THIS MANGA...
Live to be 300
Person Nakamura

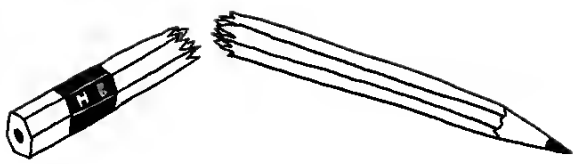
...GETS A THUMBS DOWN.

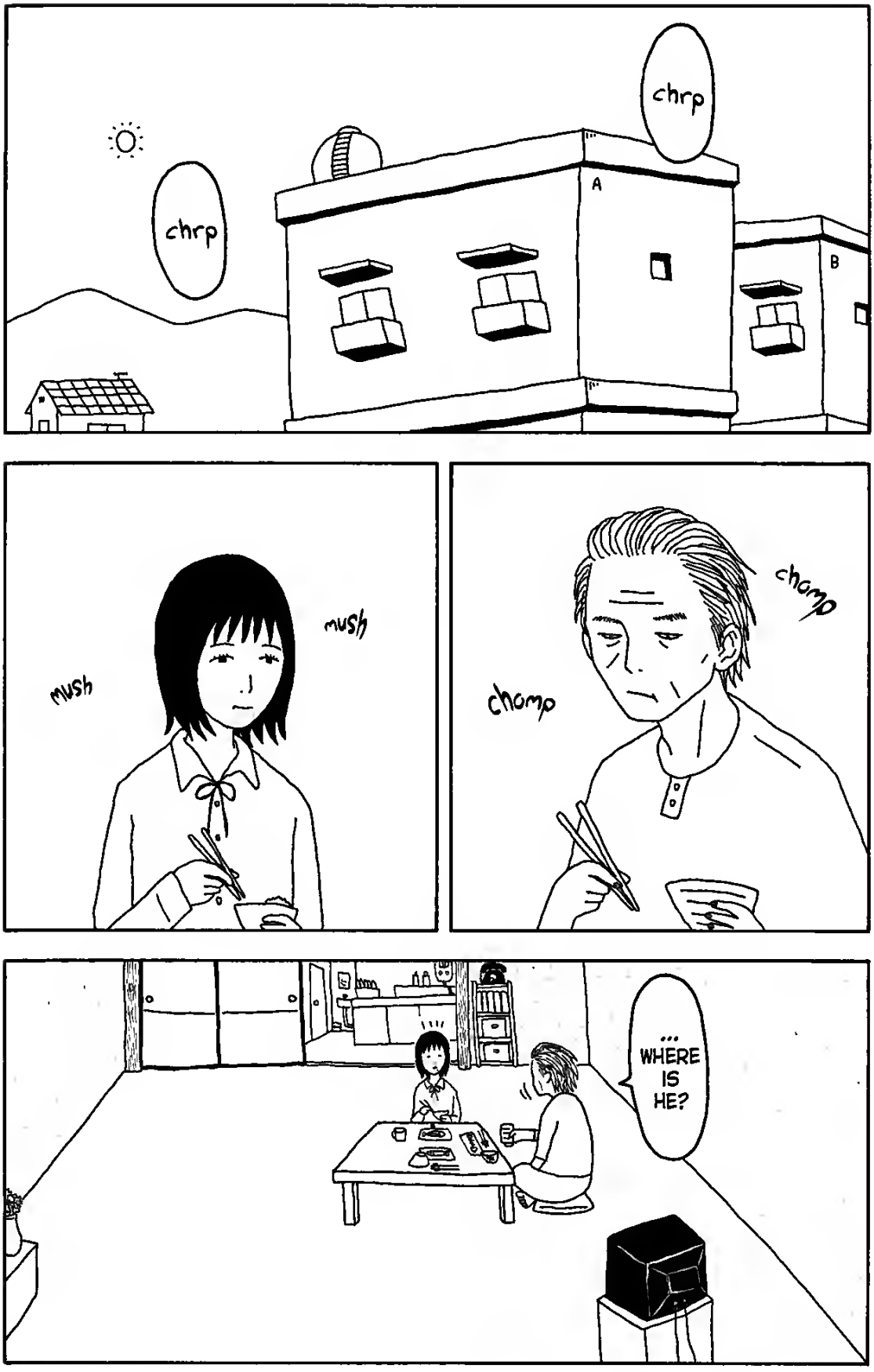

Italy

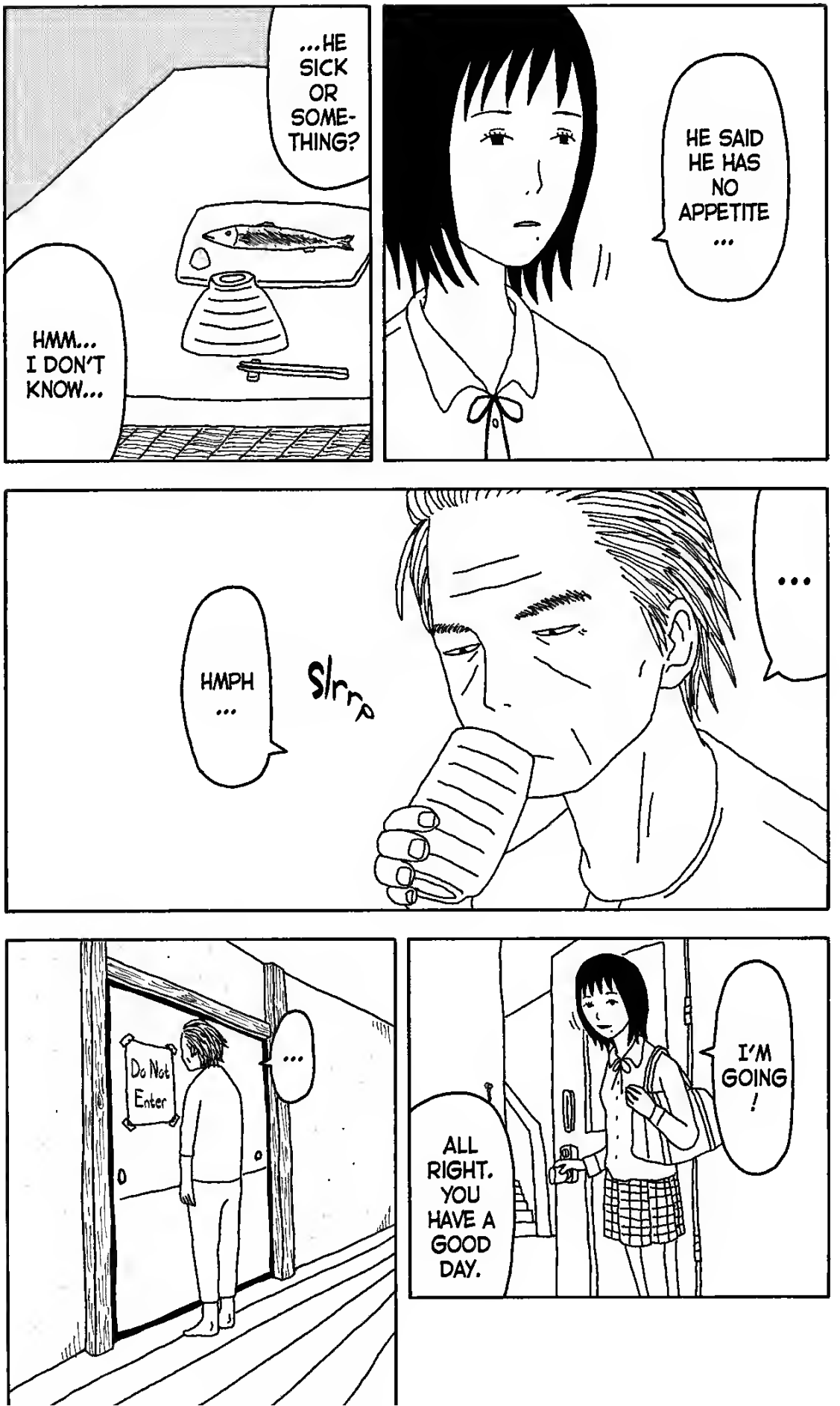
(42)
...For real?
Italy

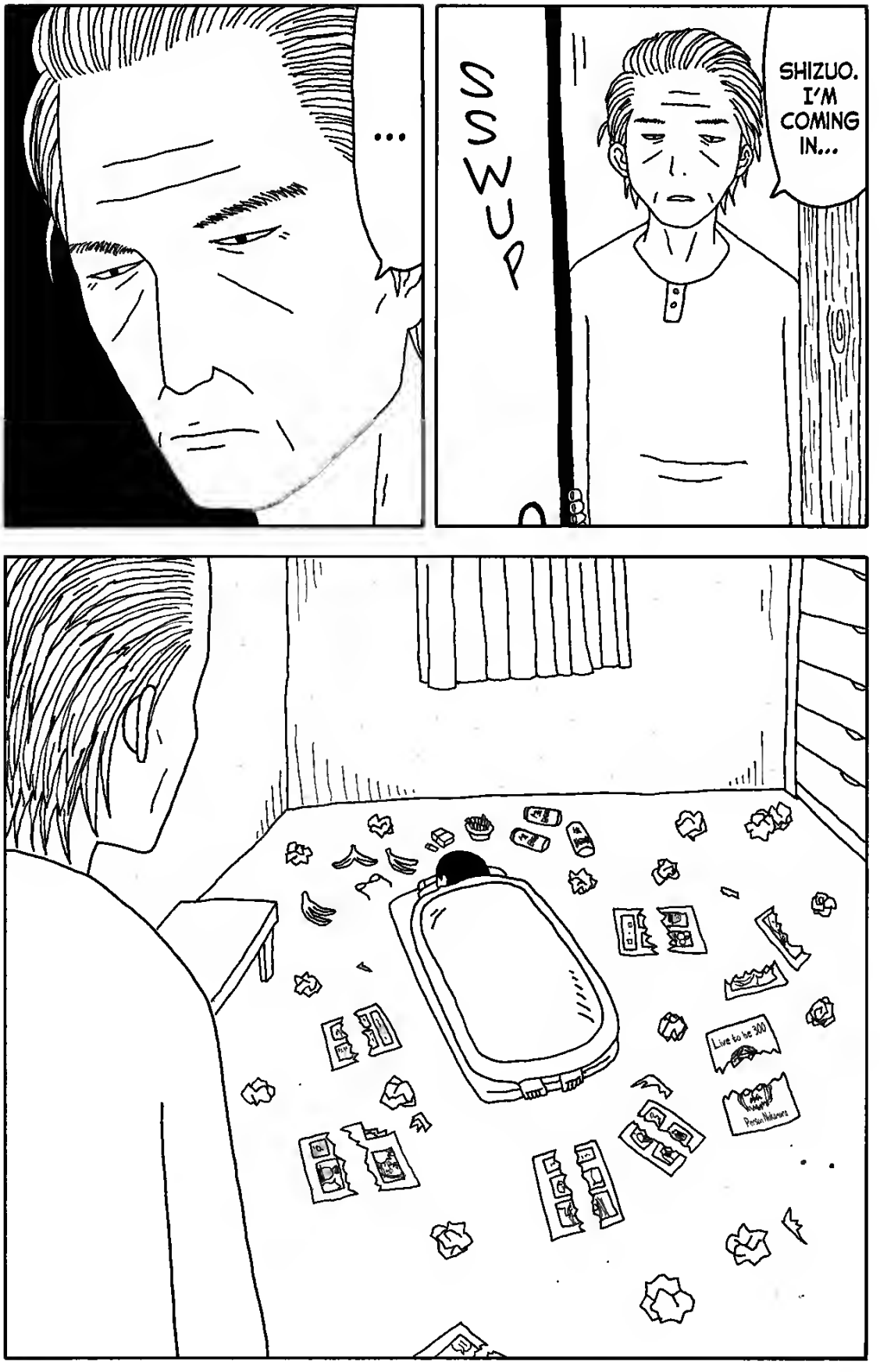
(23)
For real.
EKKE
Umami
Chrysalides

Chapter 18:
Setback



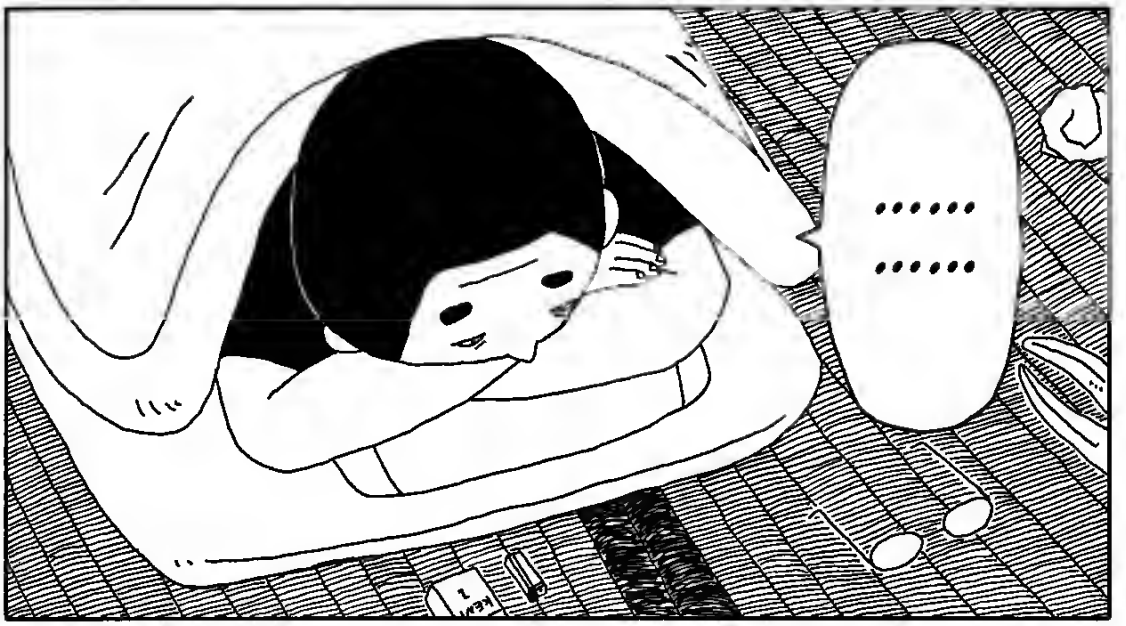

chrp
chrp
A
B
mush
mush
champ
chomp
... WHERE IS HE?


...HE SICK OR SOME-THING?
HMM... I DON'T KNOW...
HE SAID HE HAS NO APPETITE ...
...
HMPH ...
Slrrp
...
Do Not Enter
I'M GOING!
ALL RIGHT. YOU HAVE A GOOD DAY.

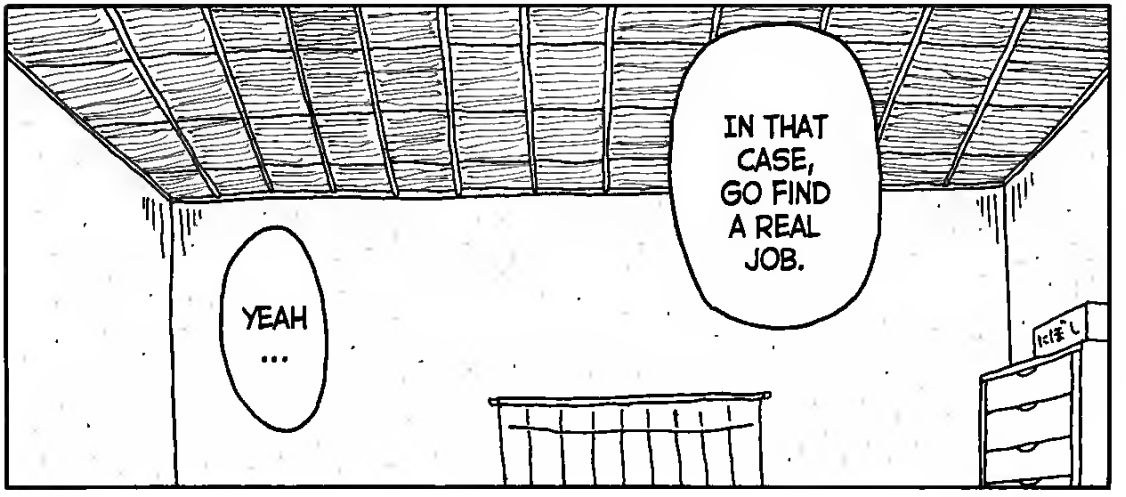

...
SSWUP
SHIZUO. I'M COMING IN...
Live to be 300

BEER
BEER
Live to be 300
Person Nakamura
... SOME-THING HAPPEN ?
NO ...
WHAT ABOUT BREAK-FAST? AREN'T YOU GONNA EAT?
DON'T WANT ANY ...
DON'T YOU HAVE TO GO TO WORK TODAY?
GOT A LEAVE OF ABSENCE ...
... HOW'S THE MANGA COMING ALONG?
...

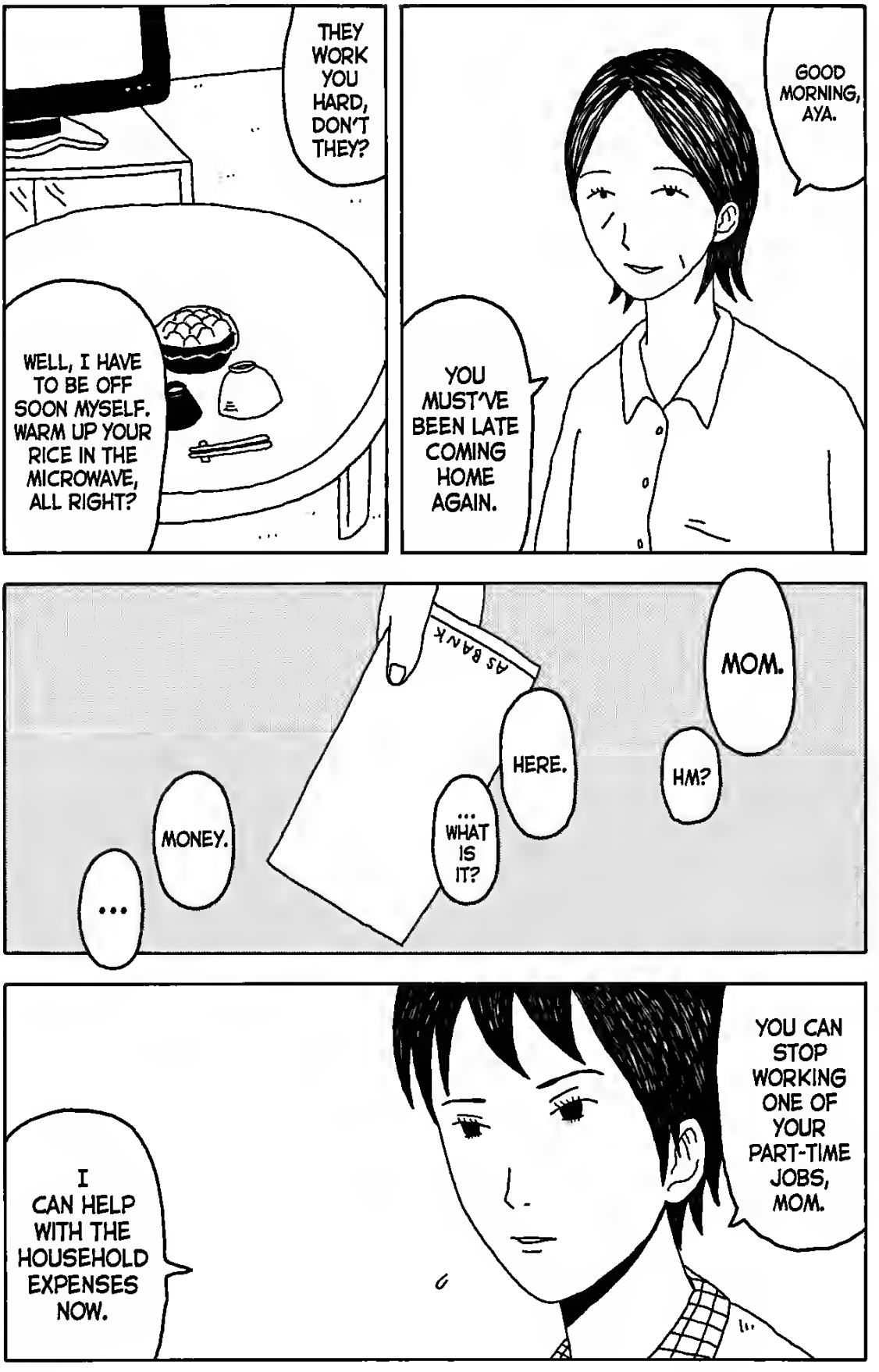
I
QUIT.

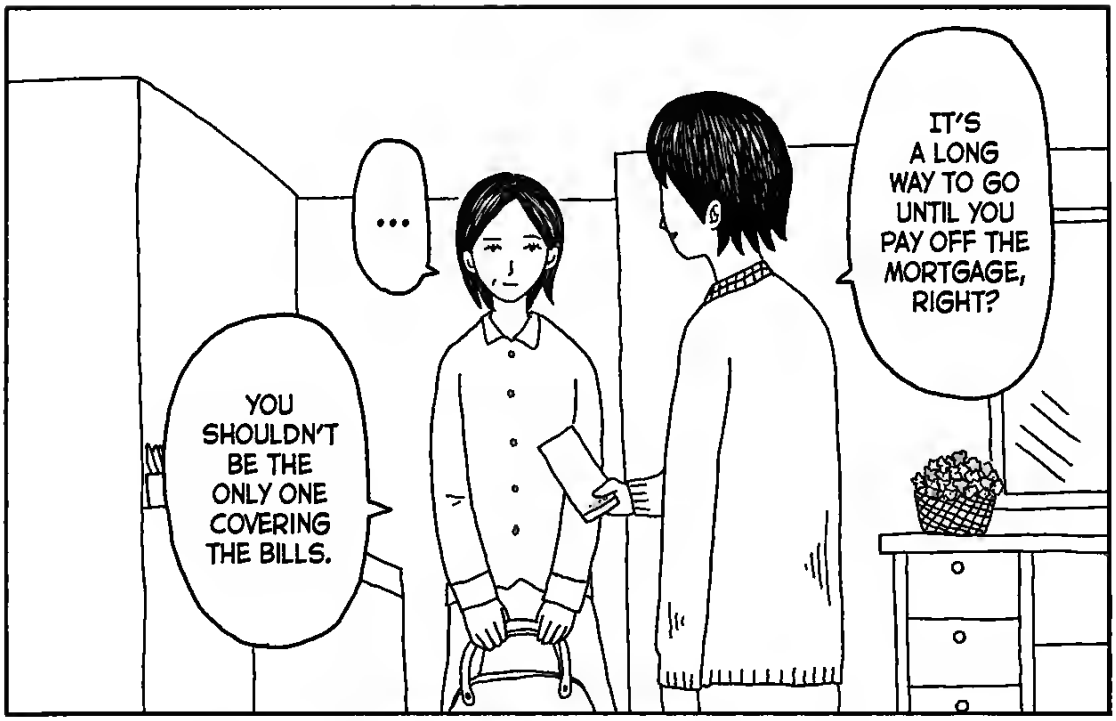

.....
.....

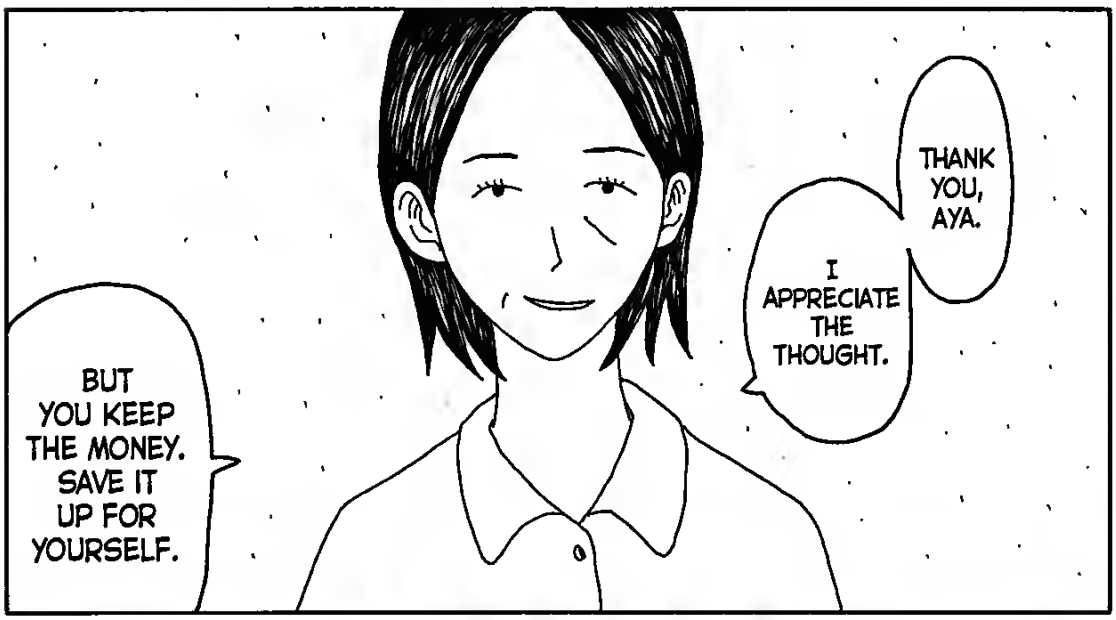
OKAY
...
...


IN THAT CASE, GO FIND A REAL JOB.
YEAH
...

Unami
Unami
HI.

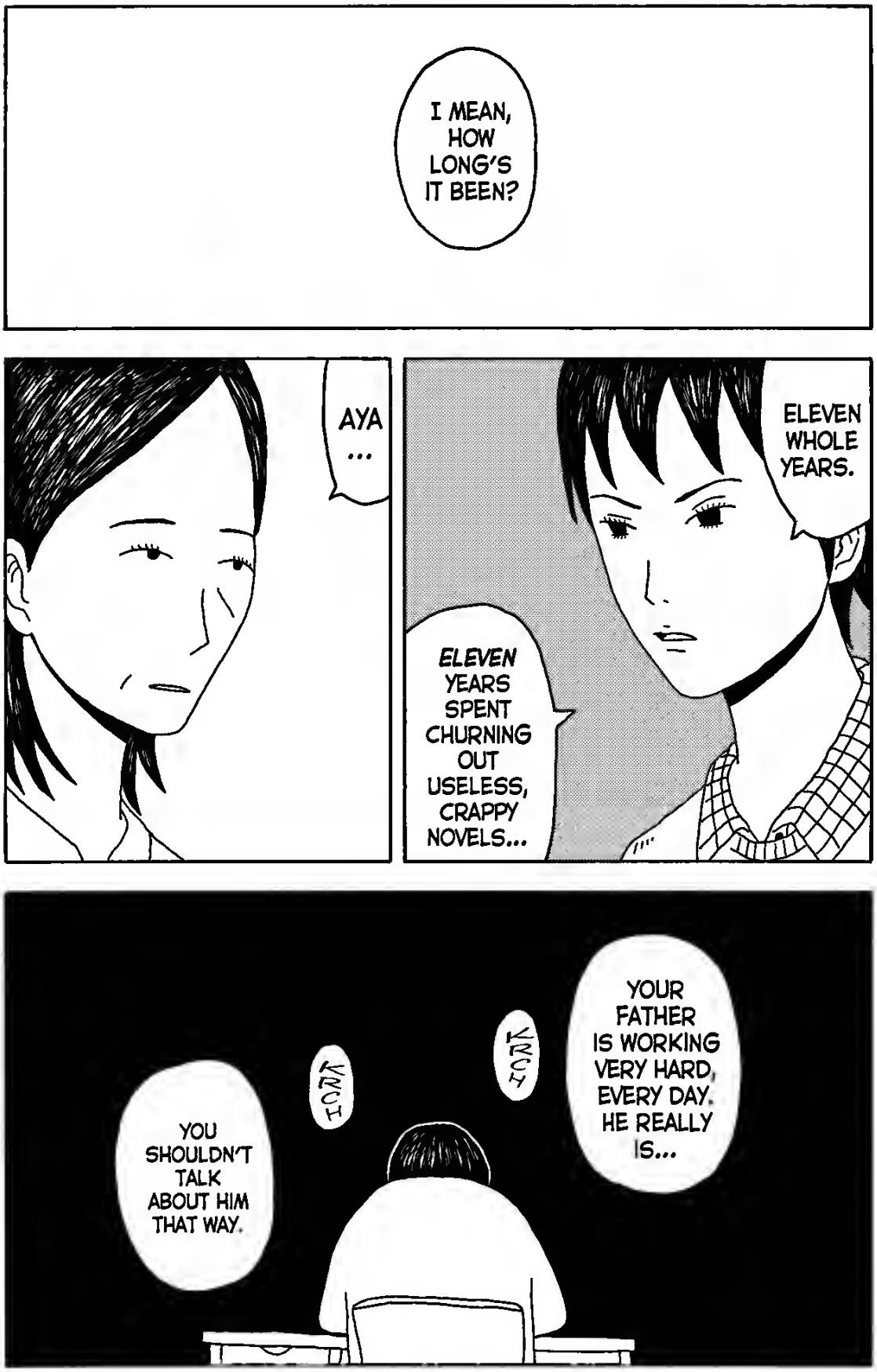

THEY WORK YOU HARD, DON'T THEY?
WELL, I HAVE TO BE OFF SOON MYSELF. WARM UP YOUR RICE IN THE MICROWAVE, ALL RIGHT?
GOOD MORNING, AYA.
YOU MUST'VE BEEN LATE COMING HOME AGAIN.
MOM.
HM?
HERE.
AS BANK
... WHAT IS IT?
MONEY.
...
YOU CAN STOP WORKING ONE OF YOUR PART-TIME JOBS, MOM.
I CAN HELP WITH THE HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES NOW.

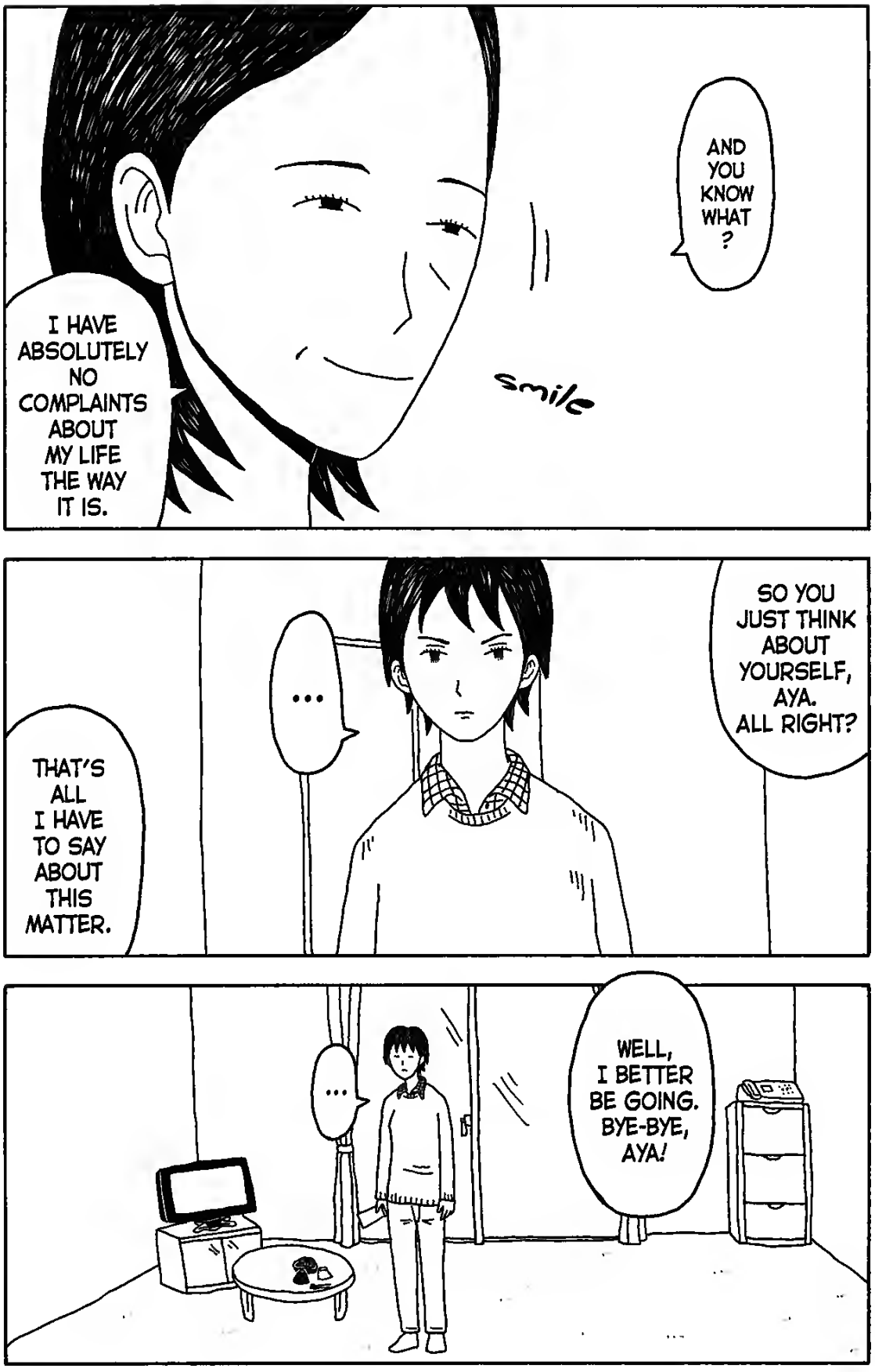

IT'S A LONG WAY TO GO UNTIL YOU PAY OFF THE MORTGAGE, RIGHT?
...
YOU SHOULDN'T BE THE ONLY ONE COVERING THE BILLS.

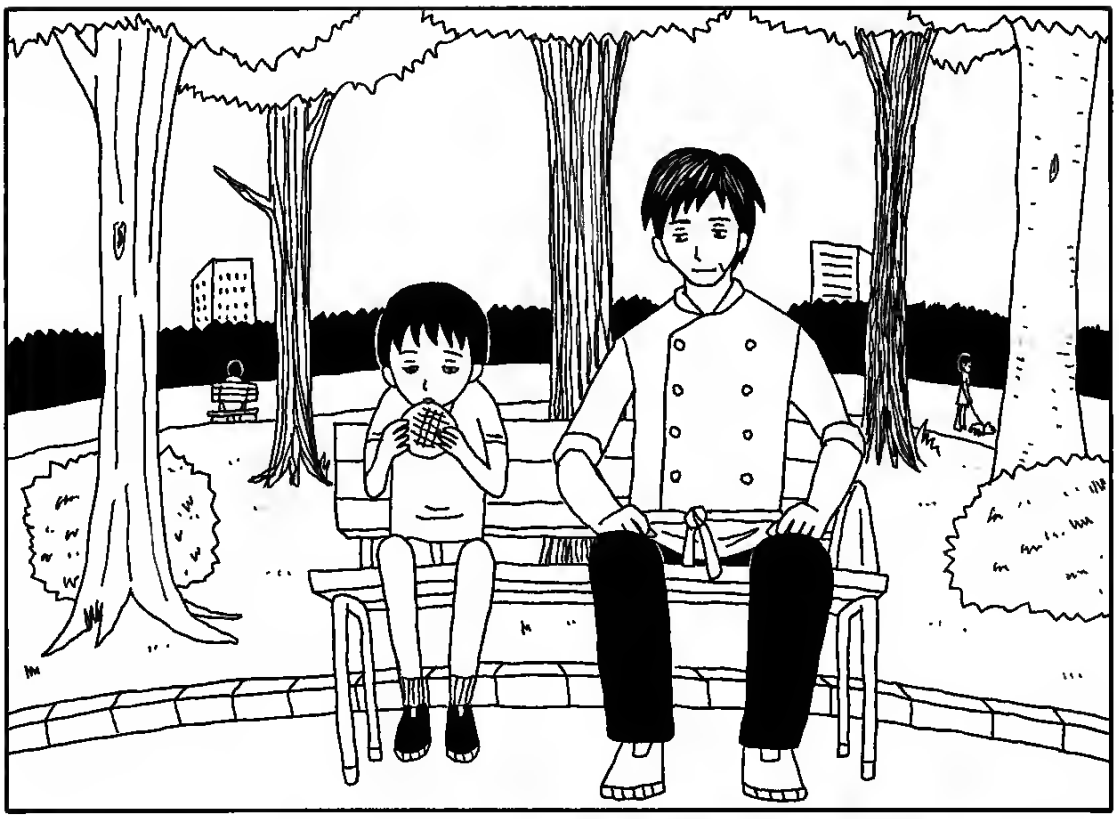

THANK YOU, AYA.
I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT.
BUT YOU KEEP THE MONEY. SAVE IT UP FOR YOURSELF.

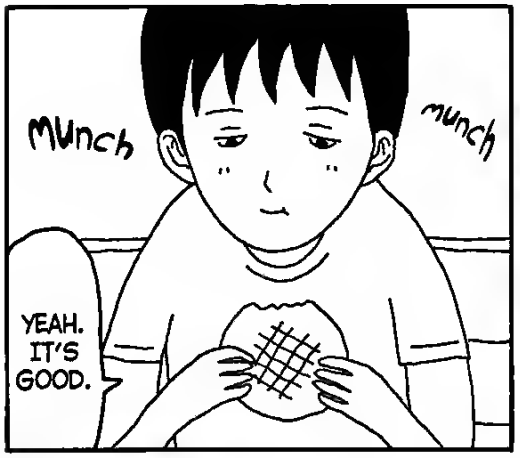
...
... WHY ?

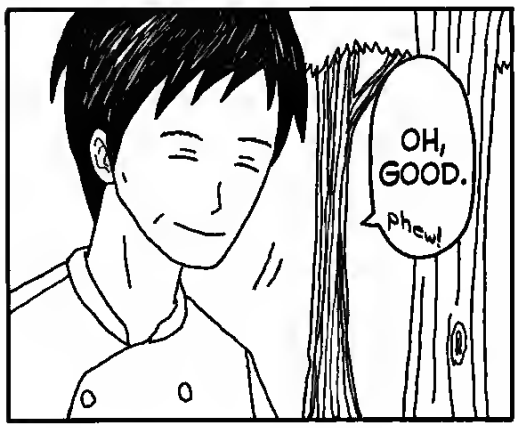
THAT'S NO WAY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR FATHER, AYA...
A LOSER IS A LOSER IS A LOSER!
WHY DO YOU WORK YOURSELF TO DEATH FOR THAT LOSER?
KRCH
KRCH
KRCH
THAT LOUSY WANNABE NOVELIST!


I MEAN, HOW LONG'S IT BEEN?
AYA ...
ELEVEN WHOLE YEARS.
ELEVEN YEARS SPENT CHURNING OUT USELESS, CRAPPY NOVELS...
YOUR FATHER IS WORKING VERY HARD, EVERY DAY. HE REALLY IS...
YOU SHOULDN'T TALK ABOUT HIM THAT WAY.
VRUH
VRUH

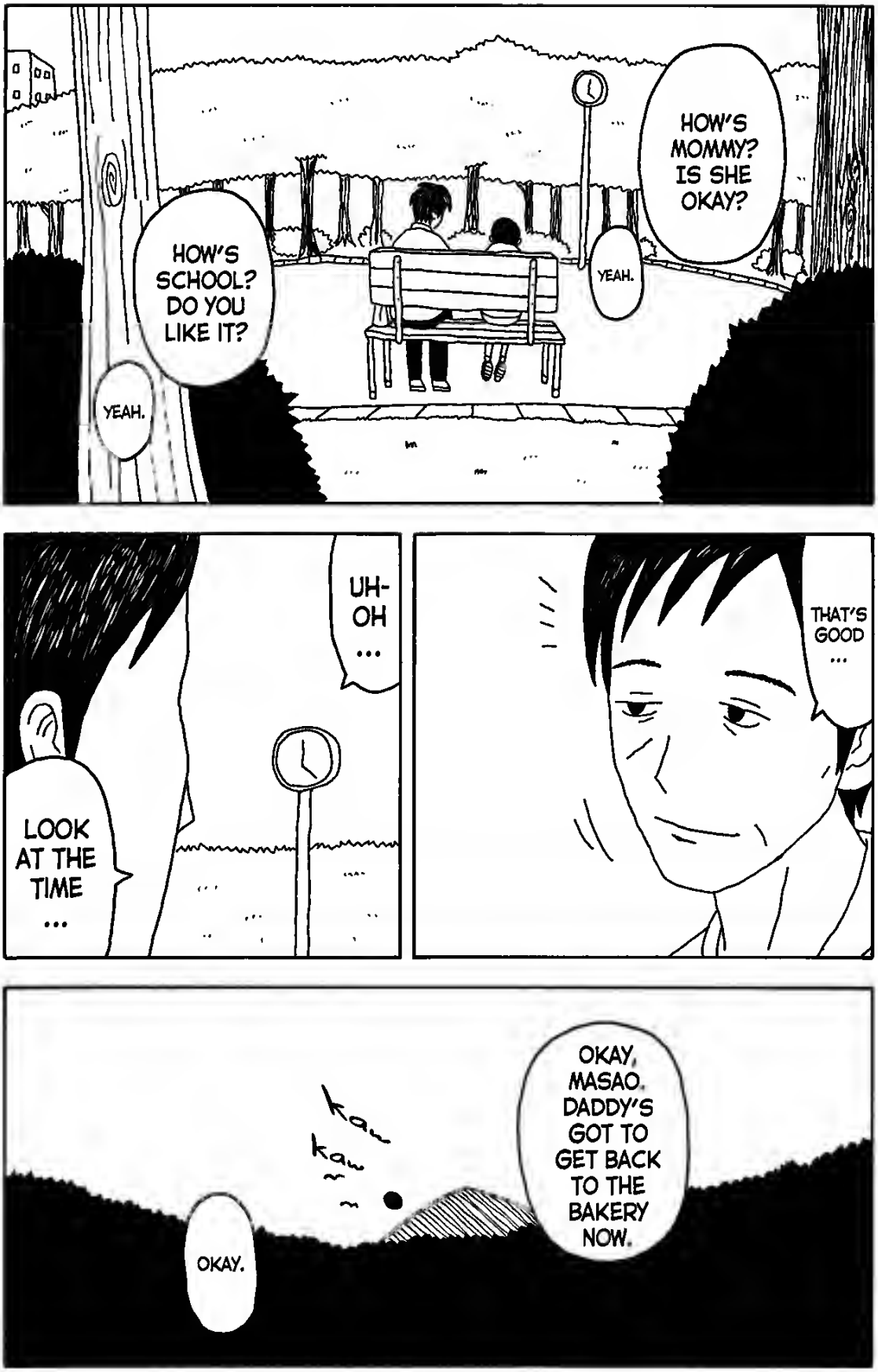

AND YOU KNOW WHAT?
I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT MY LIFE THE WAY IT IS.
smile
SO YOU JUST THINK ABOUT YOURSELF, AYA. ALL RIGHT?
...
THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS MATTER.
WELL, I BETTER BE GOING. BYE-BYE, AYA!
...

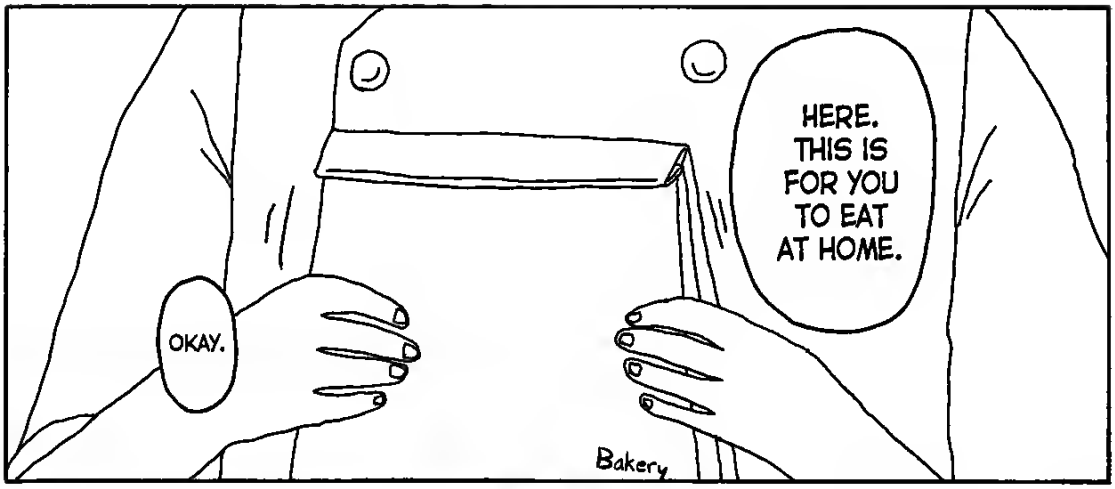



munch
munch
YEAH. IT'S GOOD.

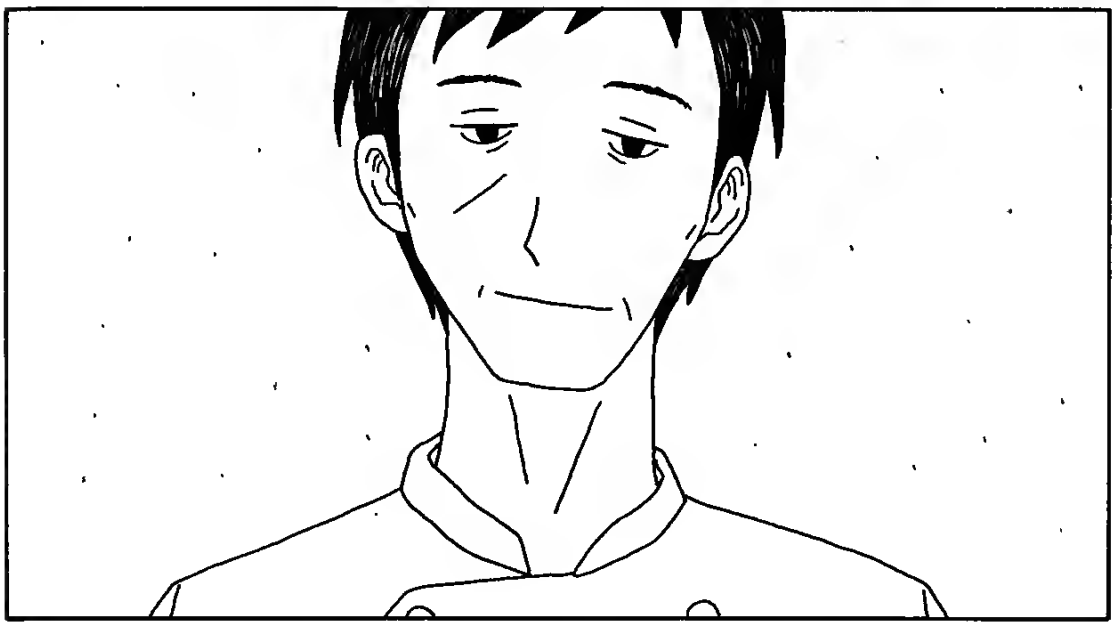

OH, GOOD.
phew!

WHAT DO YOU SAY, MASAO?
DO YOU LIKE THE BREAD DADDY MADE?

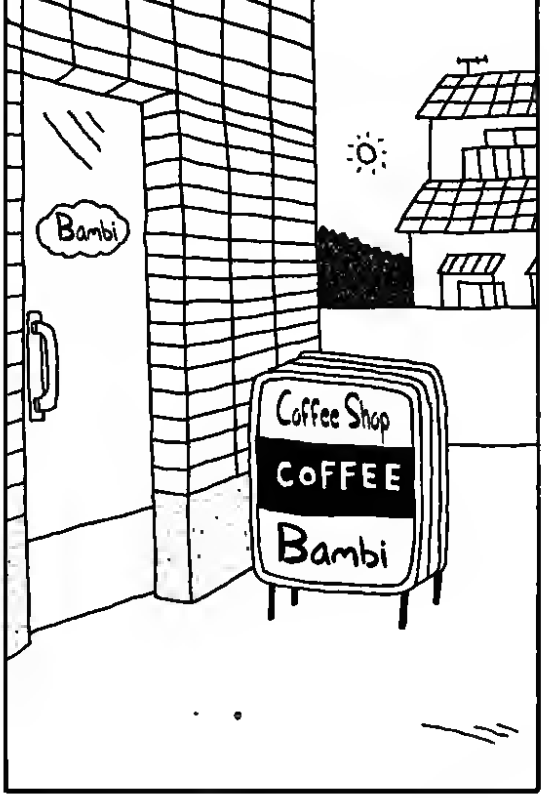

HOW'S MOMMY? IS SHE OKAY?
YEAH.
HOW'S SCHOOL? DO YOU LIKE IT?
YEAH.
UH-OH ...
LOOK AT THE TIME ...
THAT'S GOOD ...
OKAY, MASAO. DADDY'S GOT TO GET BACK TO THE BAKERY NOW.
kaw kaw ~ ~
OKAY.


HERE. THIS IS FOR YOU TO EAT AT HOME.
OKAY.
Bakery

SEE YOU SOON!
YEAH...



empty
The Job Market
JoB
BEER


Bambi
Coffee Shop
COFFEE
Bambi

I THINK YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP.

...

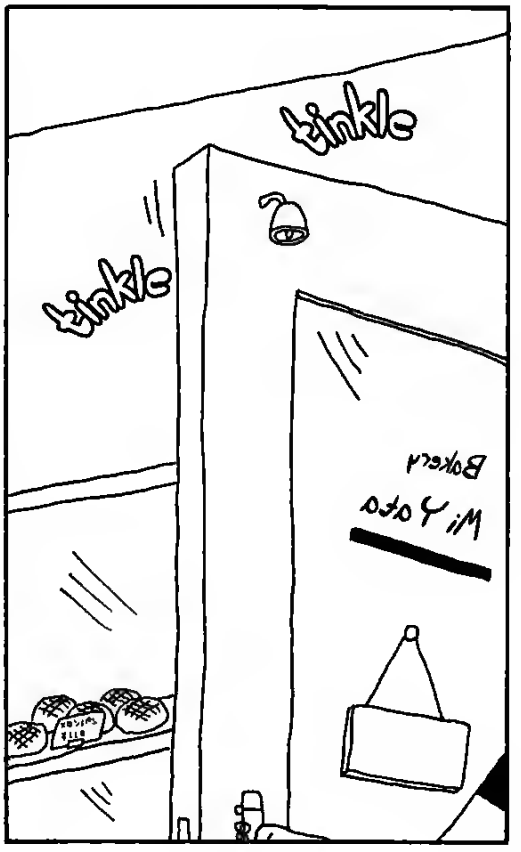
glug
glug
glug
BEER
...
Bambi
empty

whee
woooo
shwooo
thunk
HERE, PASS !
HEY ...
WOK

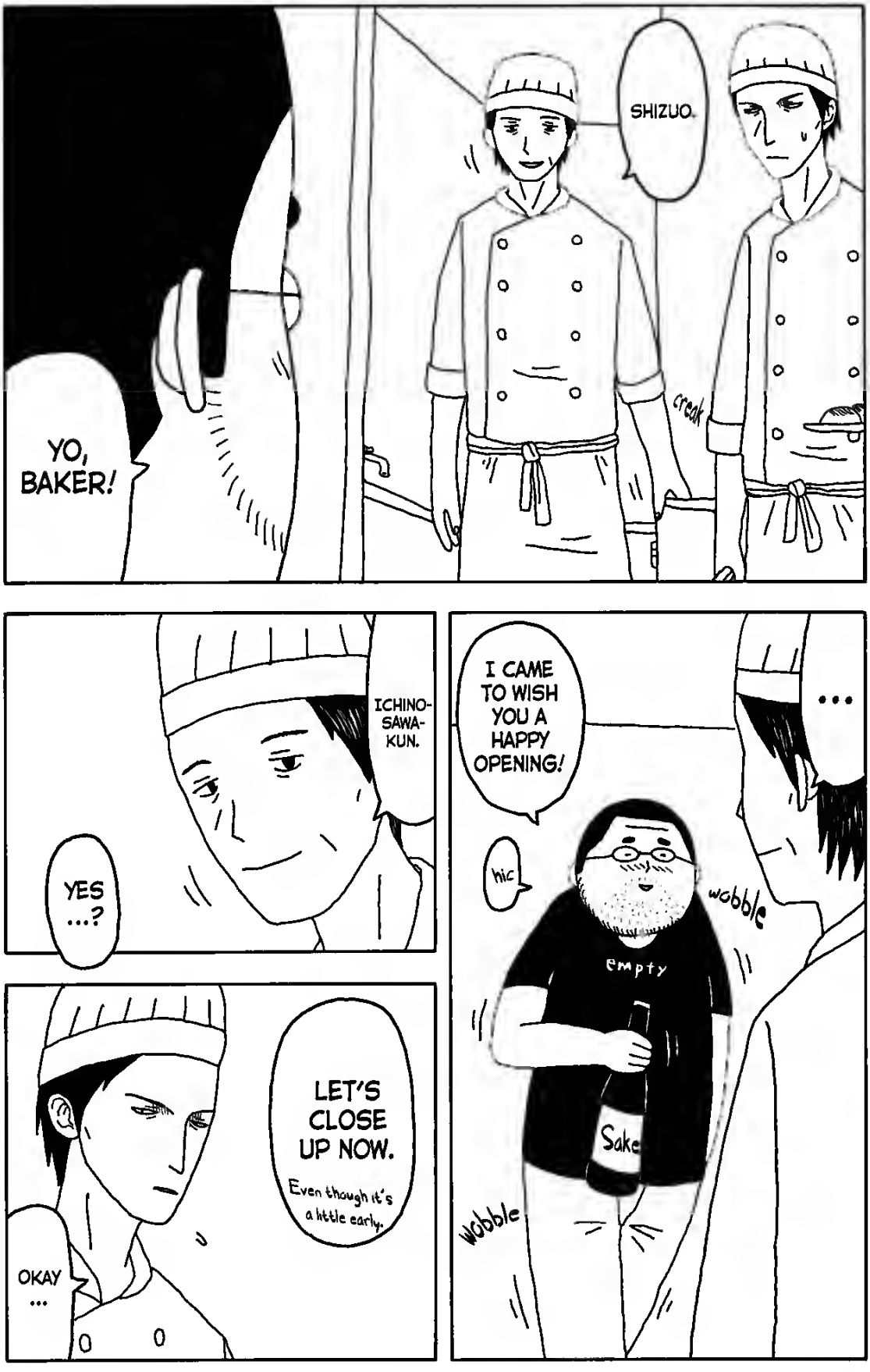
tmp
tmp
tmp
HEY!
COACH*! (*NICK-NAME.)
throb
throb
...
BEER
ARE YOU OKAY?
shuo
YEAH ...
HEY, COME PLAY WITH US, COACH*! (*NICKNAME.)
soccer
NO THANKS ...
WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU SEEM KINDA SAD.
LISTEN TO ME, KIDS...
WHAT?
...
kaw
kaw
wobble
wobble
...
GROWN-UPS GET CHEWED OUT TOO, SOME-TIMES...
Don't ever forget it...

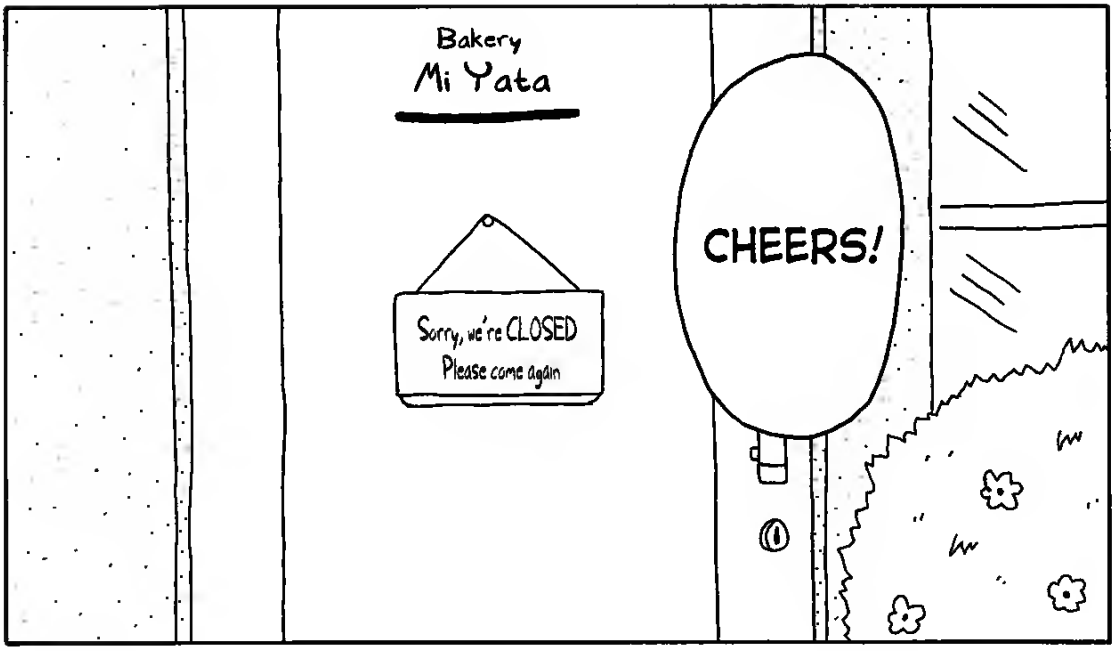
Bakery
Mi Yata
Shopping Street
Bakery
Mi Yata
OPEN
From
Hoshiwa Electric

WEL-
COME
TO—
OH
...

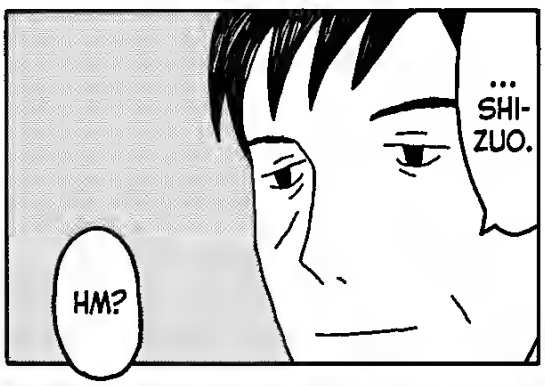

tinkle
tinkle

SHIZ-
UO-
SAN
...
YO
...
wobble
wobble
empty
Sake
YEAH
...
He's sozzled...
HEY,
SHU-
ICHI.
hic
heh
heh
heh
...
empty
YOU
WORKING
HARD?
!


YO, BAKER!
SHIZUO.
creak
ICHINO-SAWA-KUN.
YES ...?
I CAME TO WISH YOU A HAPPY OPENING!
hic
wobble
empty
Sake
wobble
...
LET'S CLOSE UP NOW.
Even though it's a little early.
OKAY ...

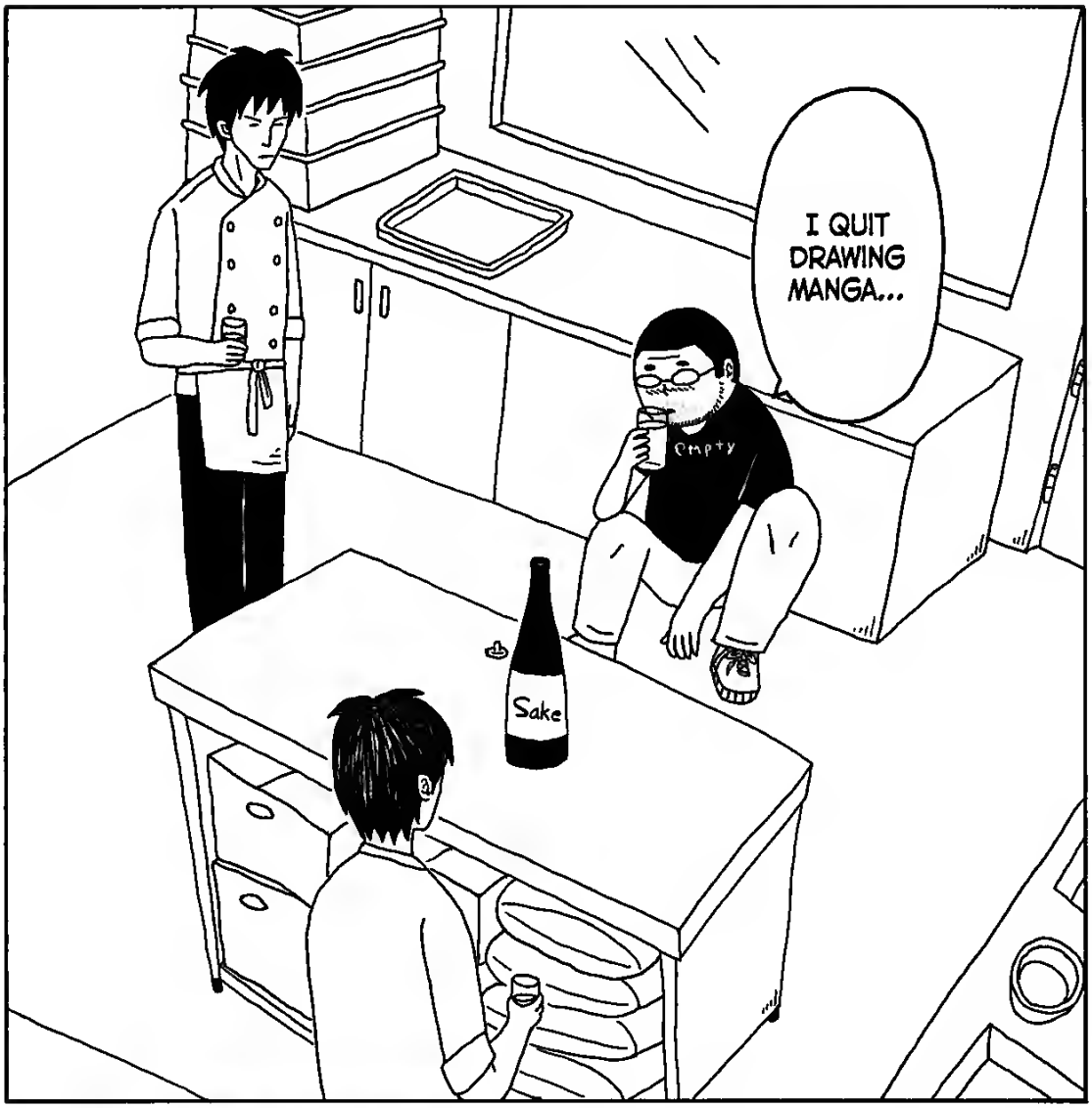

Bakery
Mi Yata
Sorry, we're CLOSED
Please come again
CHEERS!

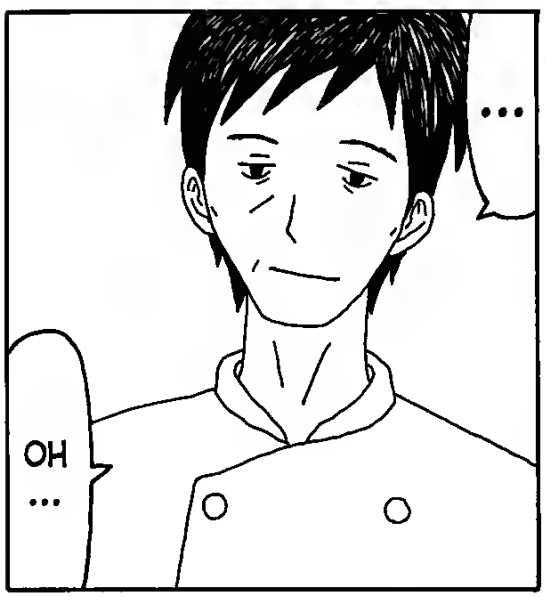
CONGRAT-
ULATIONS!


...
SHI-
ZUO.
HM?

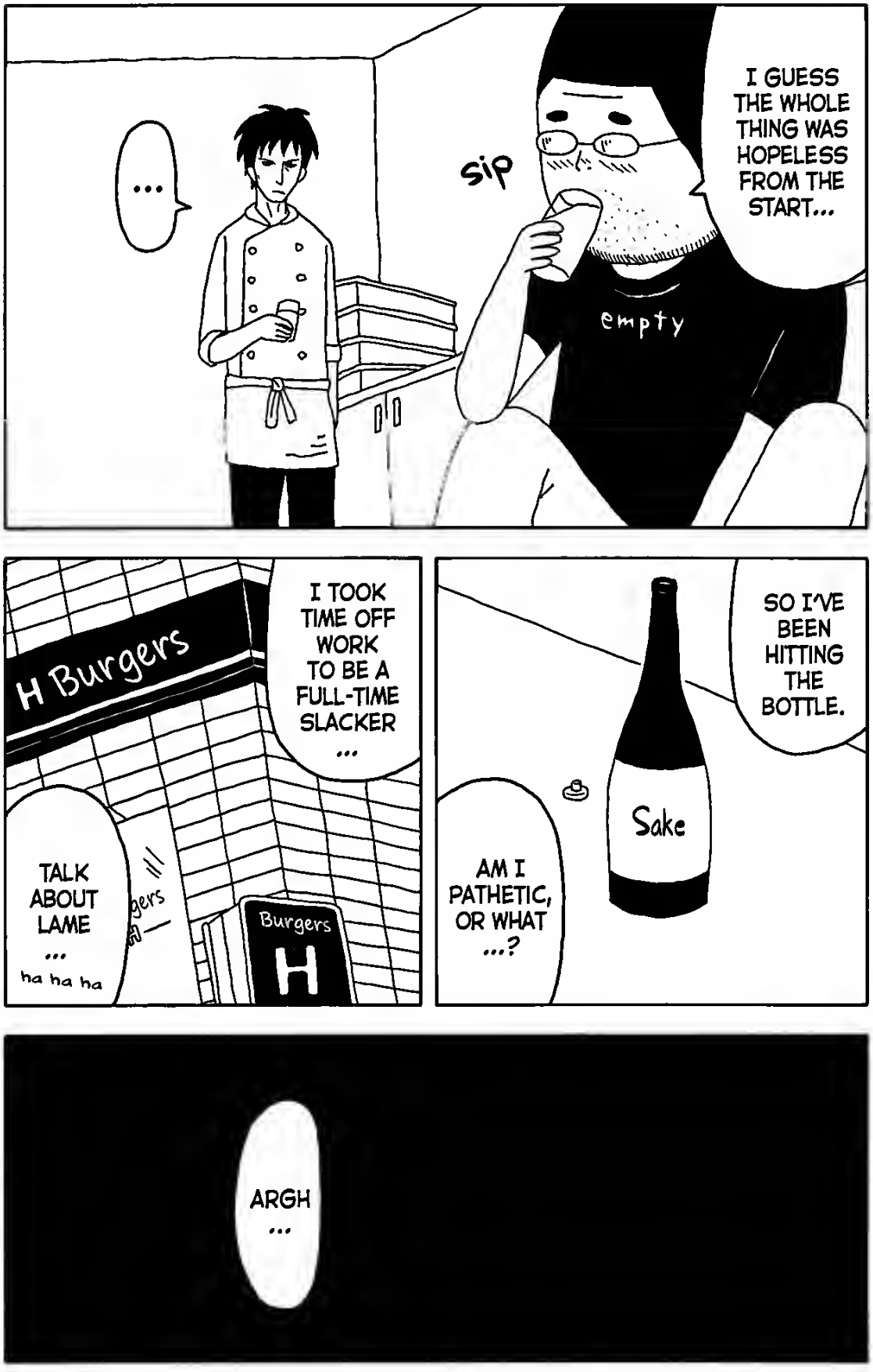
THANKS.

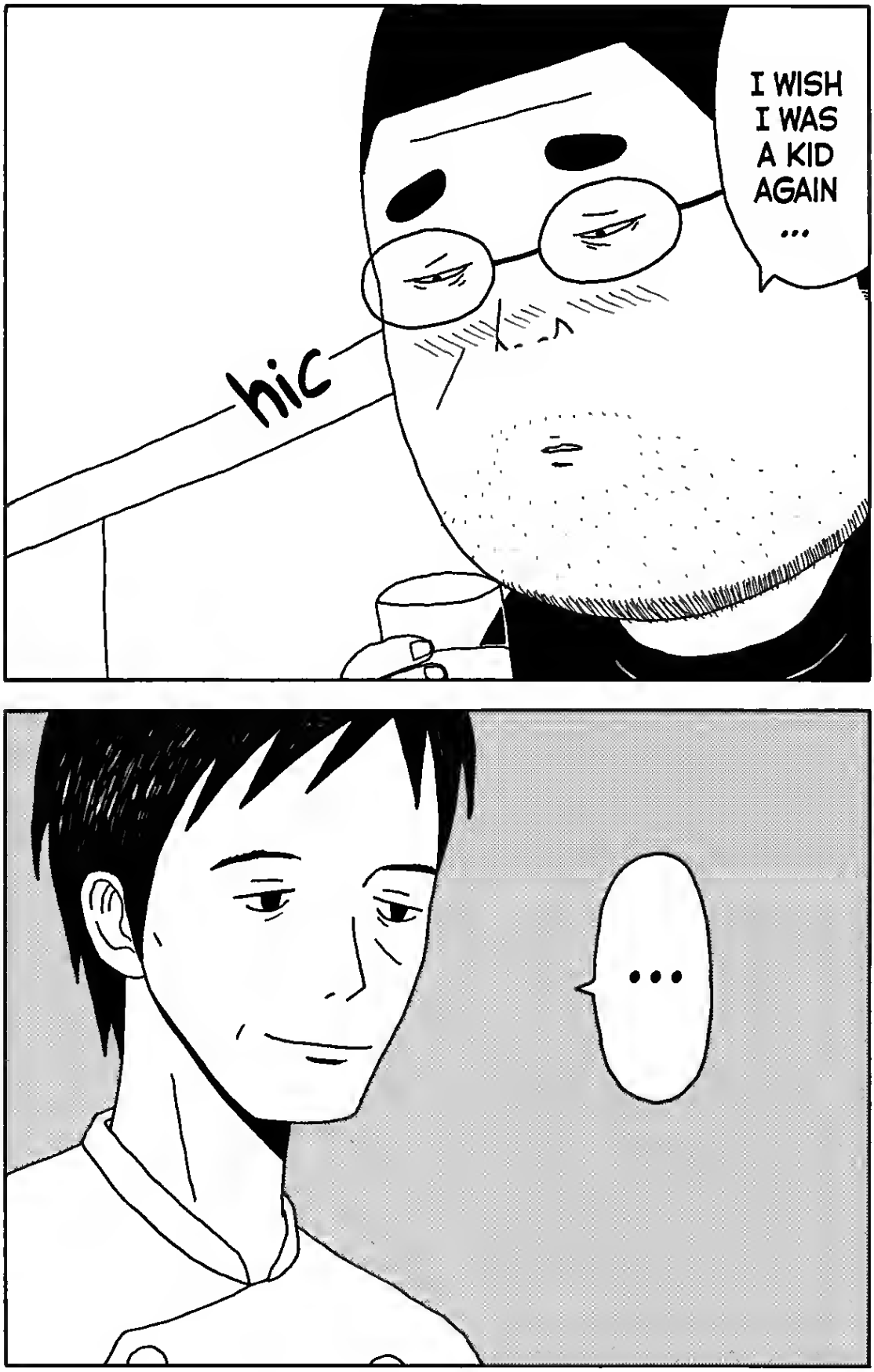
...
WHAT'S
THE
MATTER?


I QUIT DRAWING MANGA...
Empty
Sake


...
OH ...

...


...
sip
empty
I GUESS THE WHOLE THING WAS HOPELESS FROM THE START...
H Burgers
I TOOK TIME OFF WORK TO BE A FULL-TIME SLACKER ...
TALK ABOUT LAME ... ha ha ha
Burgers
H
SO I'VE BEEN HITTING THE BOTTLE.
Sake
AM I PATHETIC, OR WHAT ...?
ARGH ...

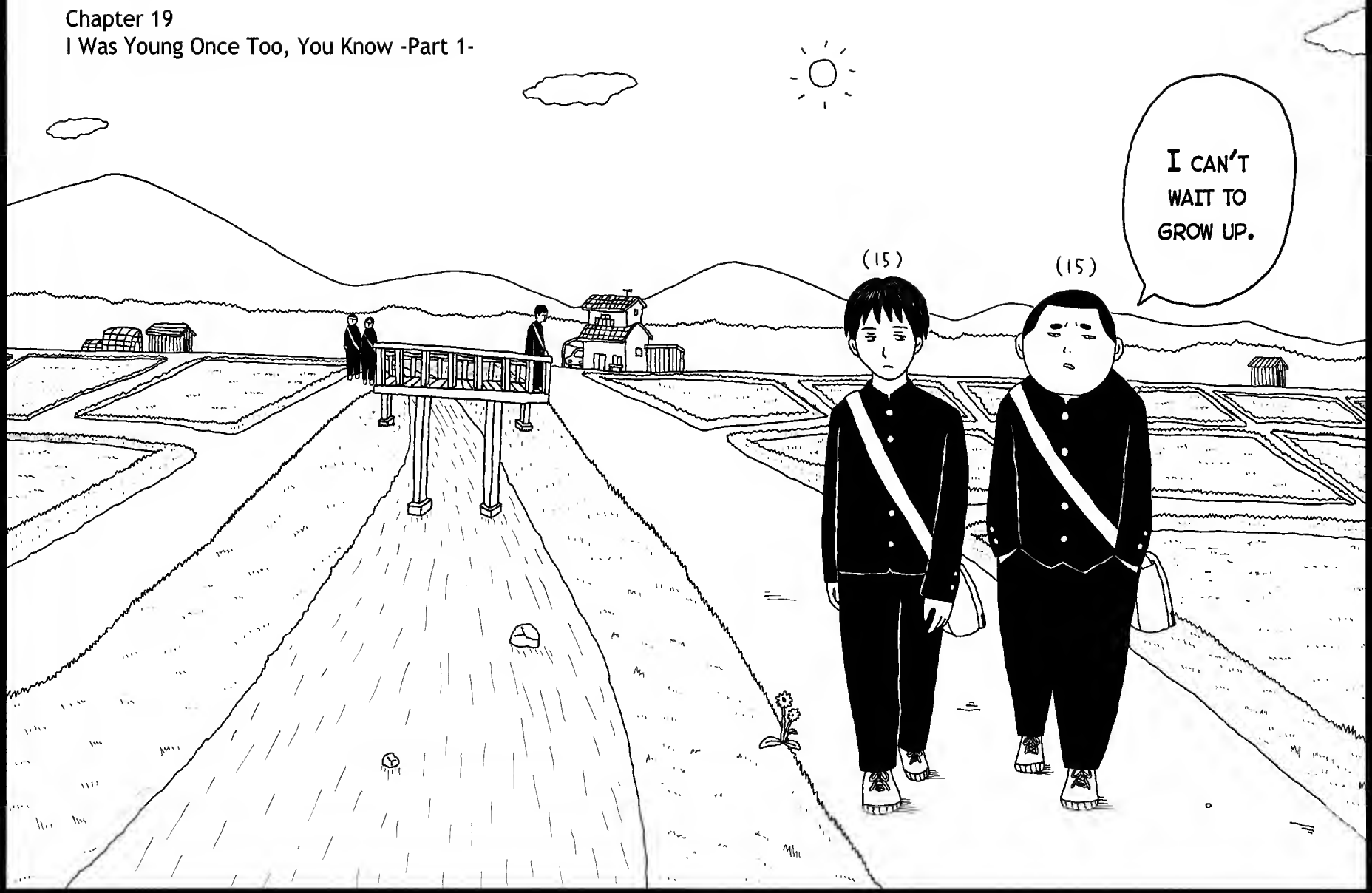

I WISH I WAS A KID AGAIN ...
hic
...

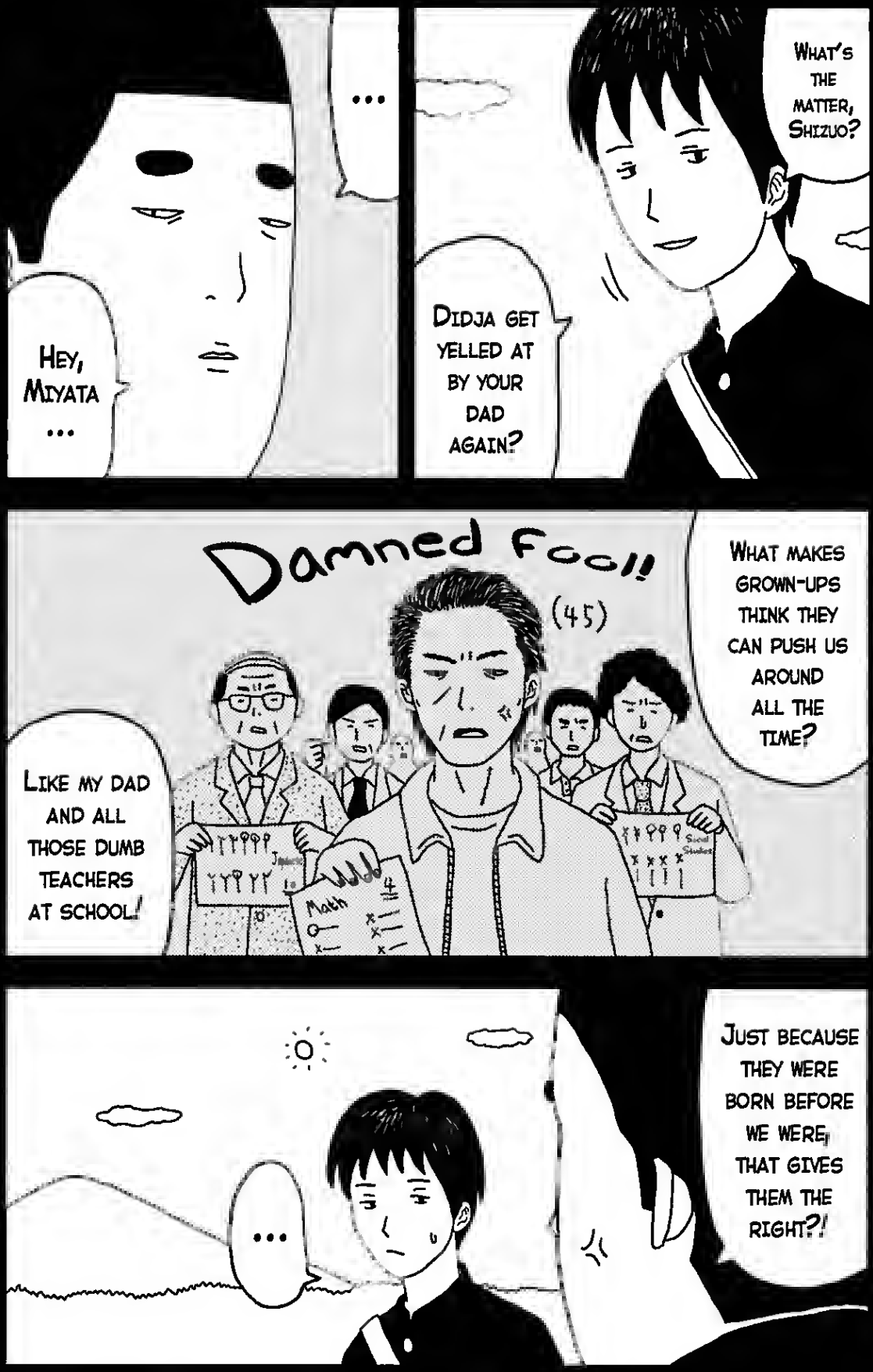
Hey, Shizuo. Remember ...?

hic
...
empty

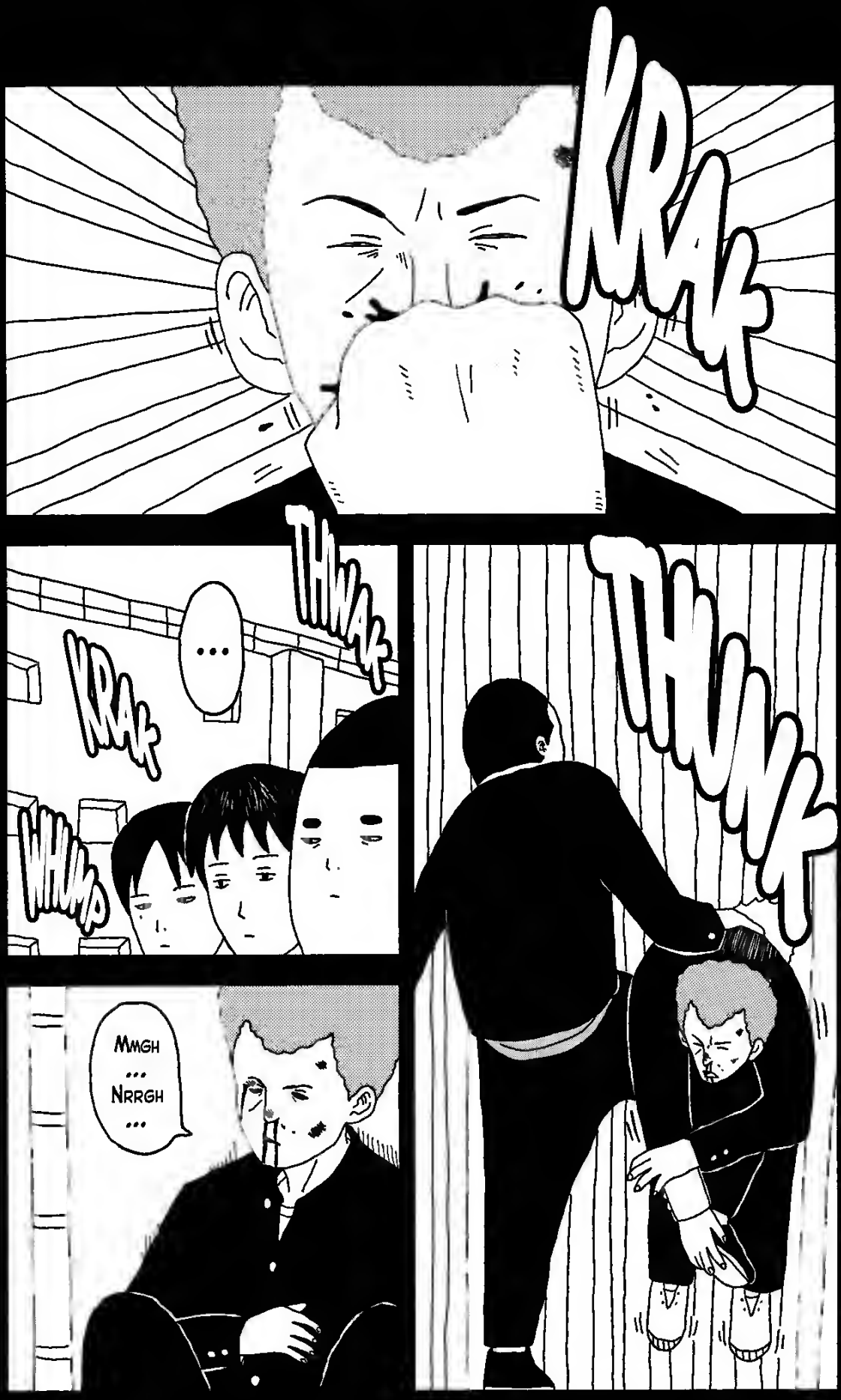
Chapter 19: I Was Young Once Too, You Know—Part 1

Chapter 19
I Was Young Once Too, You Know -Part 1-

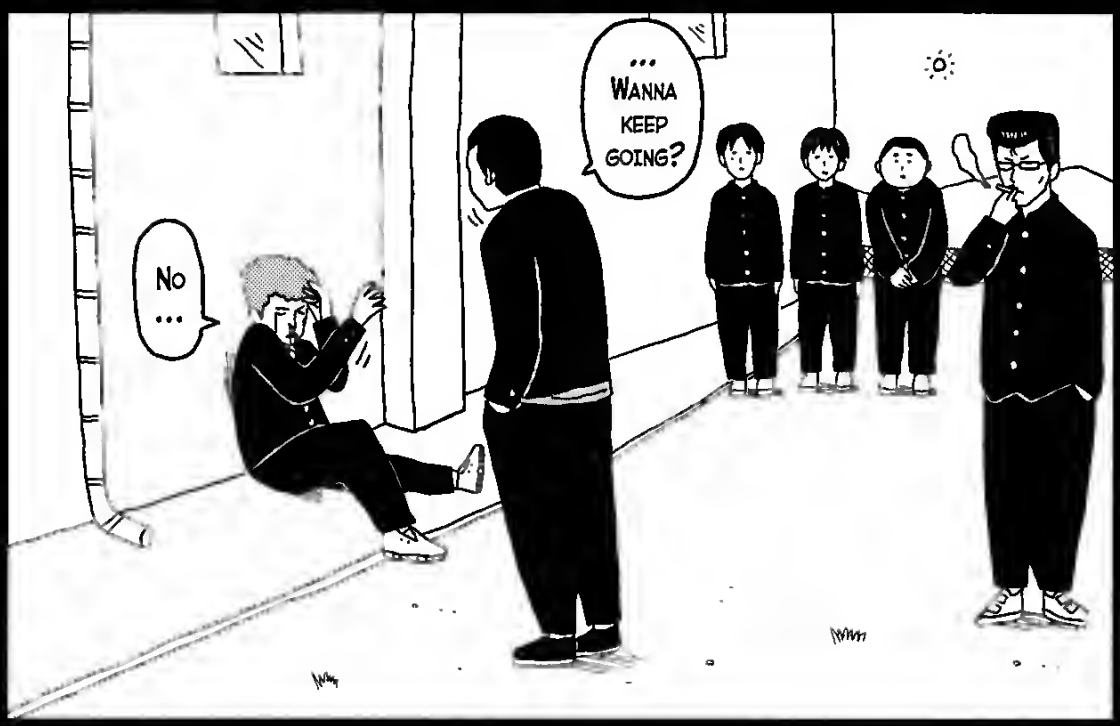



...
Hey, Miyata ...
What's the matter, Shizuo?
Didja get yelled at by your dad again?
Damned Fool!! (45)
What makes grown-ups think they can push us around all the time?
Like my dad and all those dumb teachers at school!
Math
...
Just because they were born before we were, that gives them the right?!

I CAN TELL YOU THIS MUCH, I'M NEVER GOING TO BE LIKE THAT WHEN I GROW UP! No way!
OKAY ...
MAN, I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO BE AN ADULT!
I'LL SHOW THOSE GUYS!
...
HIYA!
Oh, you too, Miyata.
TOUGH GUY*! (*NICK-NAME.)
!
GUESS WHAT? NAKANISHI-KUN'S GONNA HAVE A FIGHT TODAY!
LET'S ALL GO AND WATCH!
...
WHADDAYA WANT, TAMURA ...?
Stop calling me that...
(_ _)
HI.


KRAK
THWAK
KRAK
WHUMP
...
THUNK
MMGH
...
NRRGH
...

Akira Nakanishi,
age 15


No
...
...
WANNA
KEEP
GOING?

HM?
shbaff
Shup
LET'S GO.
YEAH ...
NAKA-NISHI-KUN... Great moves!
HEY, TOUGH GUY*. (*NICK-NAME.)
SURE. BUT ...
... I'LL NEED SOME MONEY.
Pwik
... MONEY ?
tump
GOOD TO SEE YA. GO BUY ME A DRINK.
A can of MAX coffee...
I ALWAYS GET REAL THIRSTY AFTER A FIGHT.

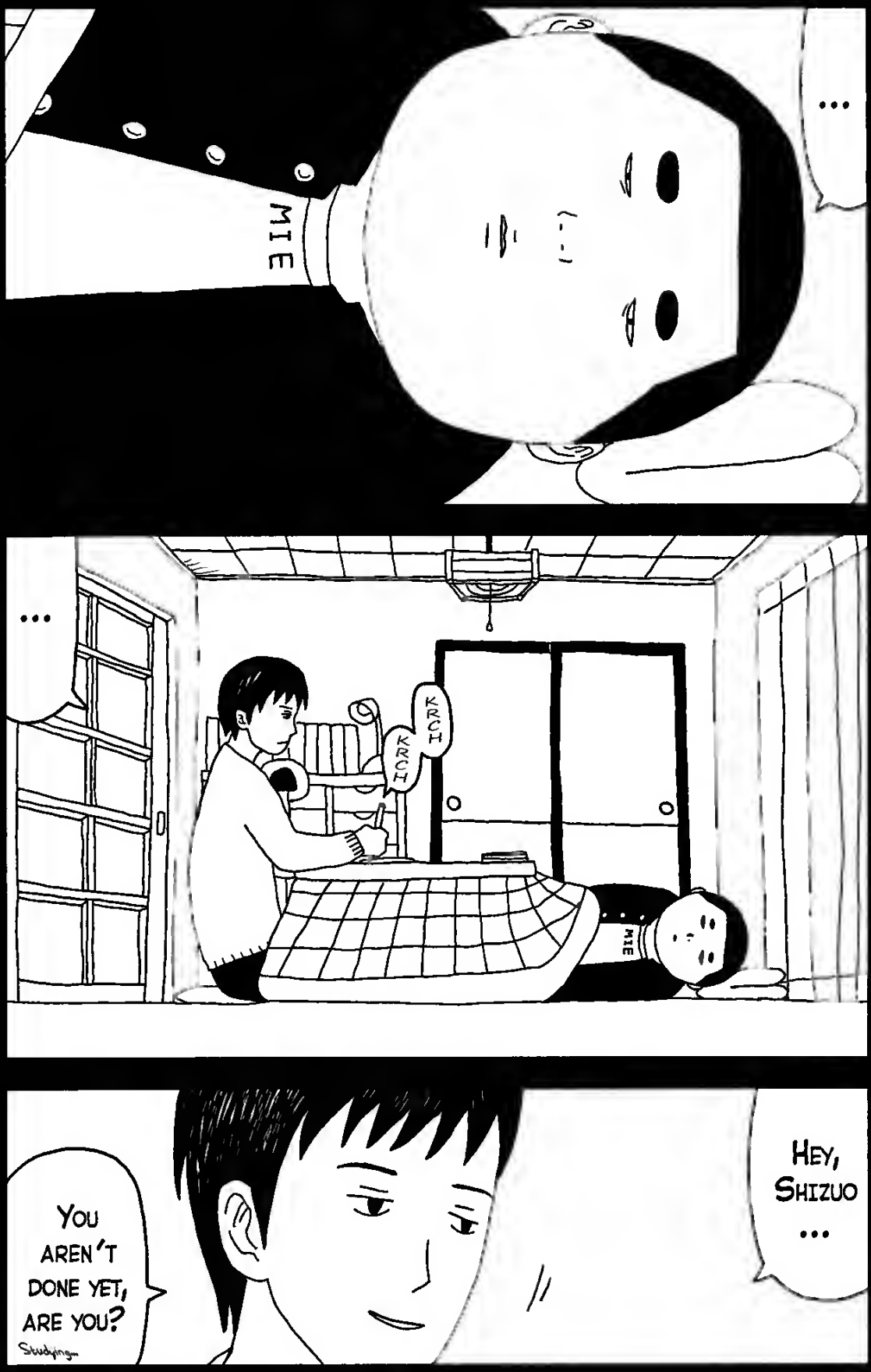
klap
(...)
COVER IT FOR ME, WILL YA ...?
WE'RE FRIENDS, AREN'T WE?
YEAH ...
I WANT YOU BACK IN ONE MINUTE. Run!
OKAY ...
HARD TO BELIEVE WE'RE THE SAME AGE...
Nakanishi-kun...
Shizuo...
I KNOW ...
...
tak tak tak tak
...

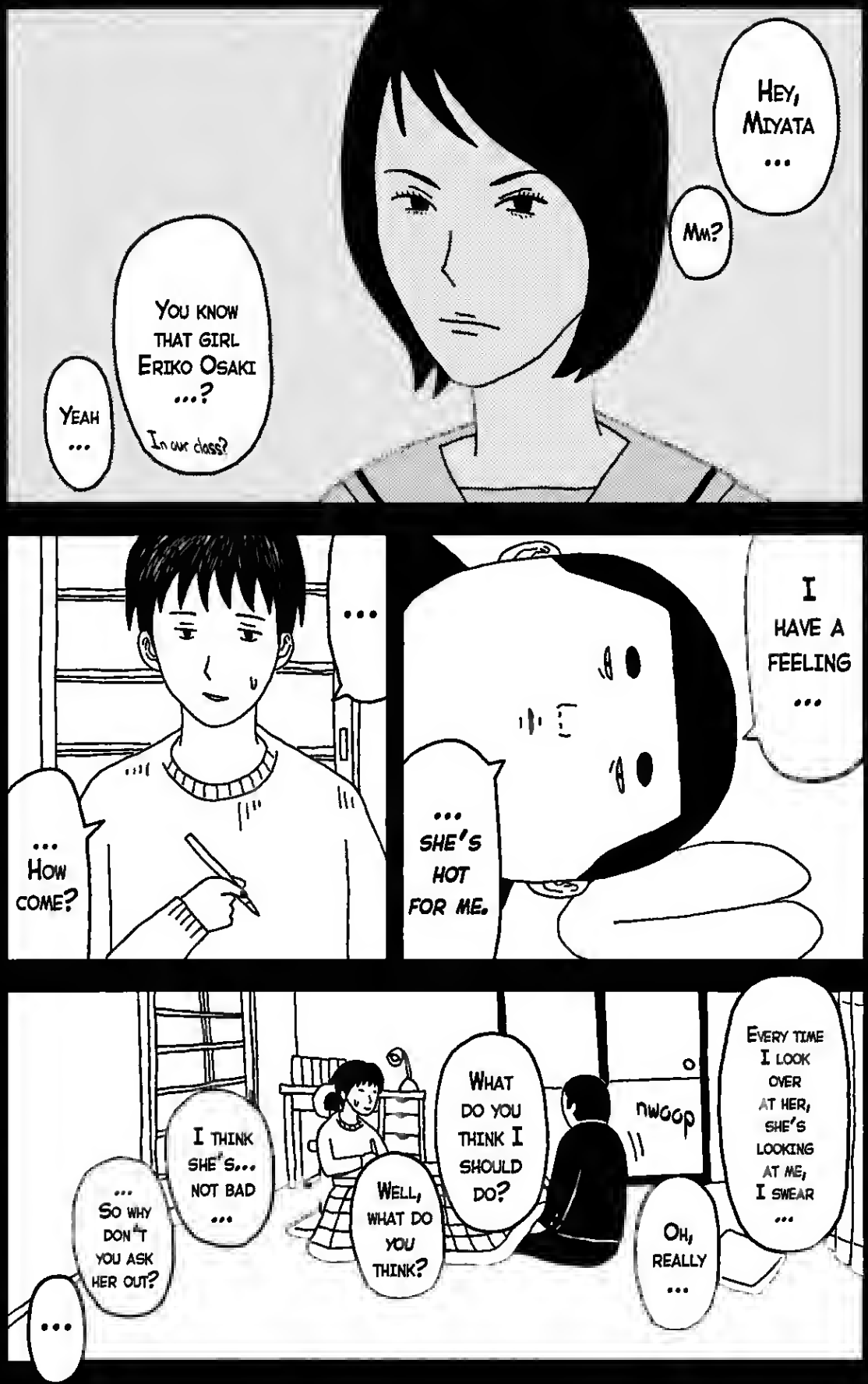
Izakaya
Yakitori Shiro
Bar
President's Office
HEY, DAD...
Shiro
Now serving Udon
Gas
Gas
Sake
... WHY?
Quince
Ume
BECAUSE YOU CAN'T HANDLE SLEEPING ALONE?
Yakitori
Shiro
chomp
chomp
I'M SPENDING THE NIGHT AT MIYATA'S TONIGHT.
JUST SO YOU KNOW.
Sake
Yakitori
Shiro
COME ON! AS IF!
WE GOTTA STUDY FOR AN EXAM.
...
... THEN, NO!
HOW COME?!

It's okay, Mister Oguro.
I invited him to come.
If you need to study, you can do that at home, can't you?
I don't want you annoying Miyata-kun's folks.
Both my grandma and my grandpa really like Shizuo.
Plus, I'm always over here eating all this food you make, so...
You'd better be studying!
I will! Have some trust, jeez.
Sake
Yakitori
Shiro
Give my thanks to your grand-parents.
I will.
... Well, all right then.
How to Cook

The nameplate reads "Miyata."

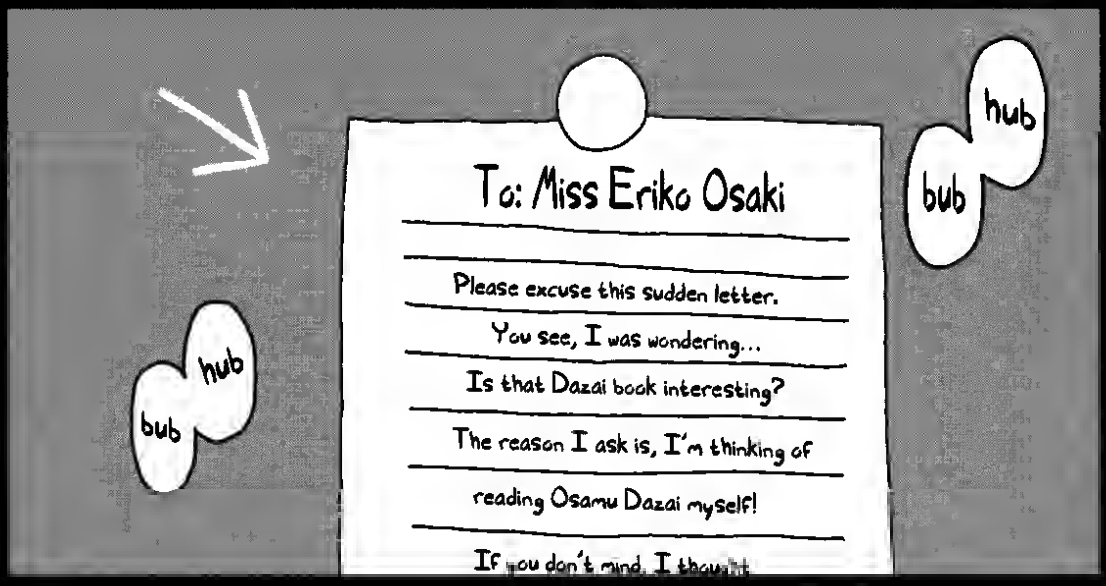
bow
...Um, thank you for all your help at my mother's funeral.
My dad and I were both very grateful ...
We're glad to have you, Shizuo.
You're welcome. But please, no need to be so formal...
I've been wondering how you're doing these days, Shizuo...
Thank you, but I'm fine now.
Good ...
Well, study hard tonight, both of you.
We will!

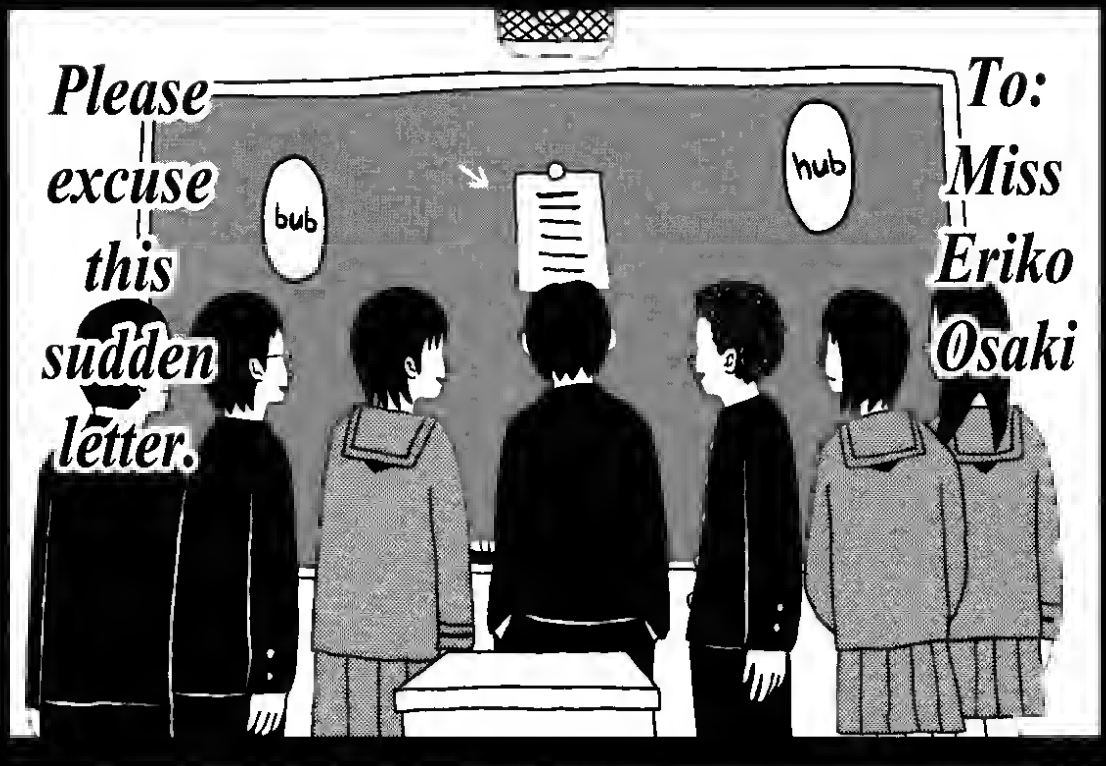

...
MIE
...
KRCH
KRCH
MIE
HEY, SHIZUO ...
YOU AREN'T DONE YET, ARE YOU?
Studying...


HEY, MIYATA ...
MM?
YOU KNOW THAT GIRL ERIKO OSAKI ...?
In our class?
YEAH ...
...
HOW COME?
I HAVE A FEELING ...
... SHE'S HOT FOR ME.
EVERY TIME I LOOK OVER AT HER, SHE'S LOOKING AT ME, I SWEAR ...
nwoop
OH, REALLY ...
WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK SHE'S... NOT BAD ...
... SO WHY DON'T YOU ASK HER OUT?
...

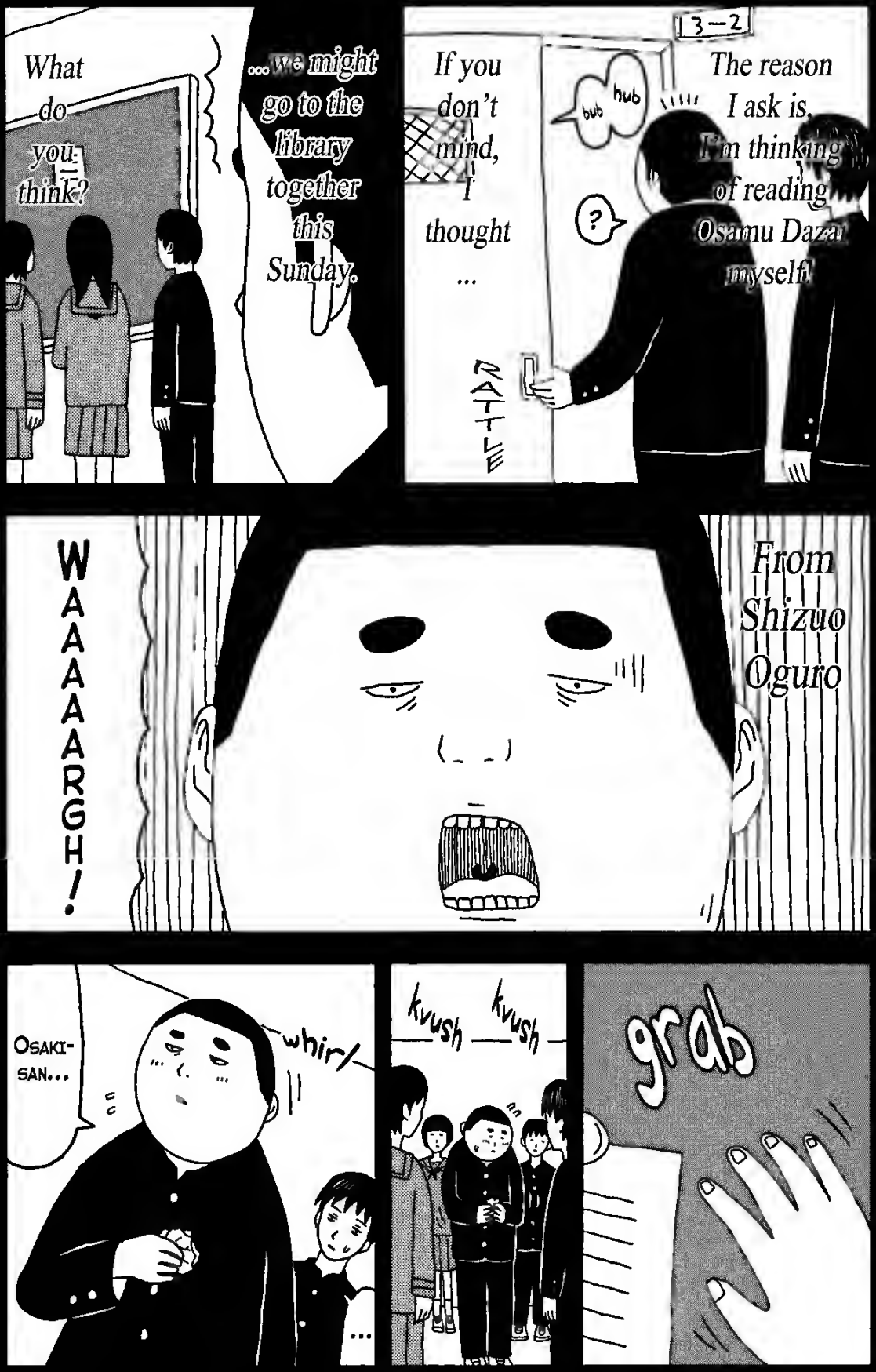
stare
...
DING
DONG
DING
DONG
Middle School
...
flik
thud
...
flap
The Setting Sun
Osamu Dazai

whirl
...
...You sure?
SEE?! I TOLD YOU!
Egami
Osaki
WHADDAYA SAY, MIYATA? I MIGHT FINALLY HAVE A GIRLFRIEND NOW!
...
NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT IS FOR HER TO FIND THE LETTER I SLIPPED IN HER SHOE LOCKER...
UH-HUH ...
I heard that...
HEH, HEH, HEH ...
...
I BET ...
thump
I'M GETTING NERVOUS!


To: Miss Eriko Osaki
Please excuse this sudden letter.
You see, I was wondering...
Is that Dazai book interesting?
The reason I ask is, I'm thinking of
reading Osamu Dazai myself!
If you don't mind, I thought
hub
bub
hub
bub

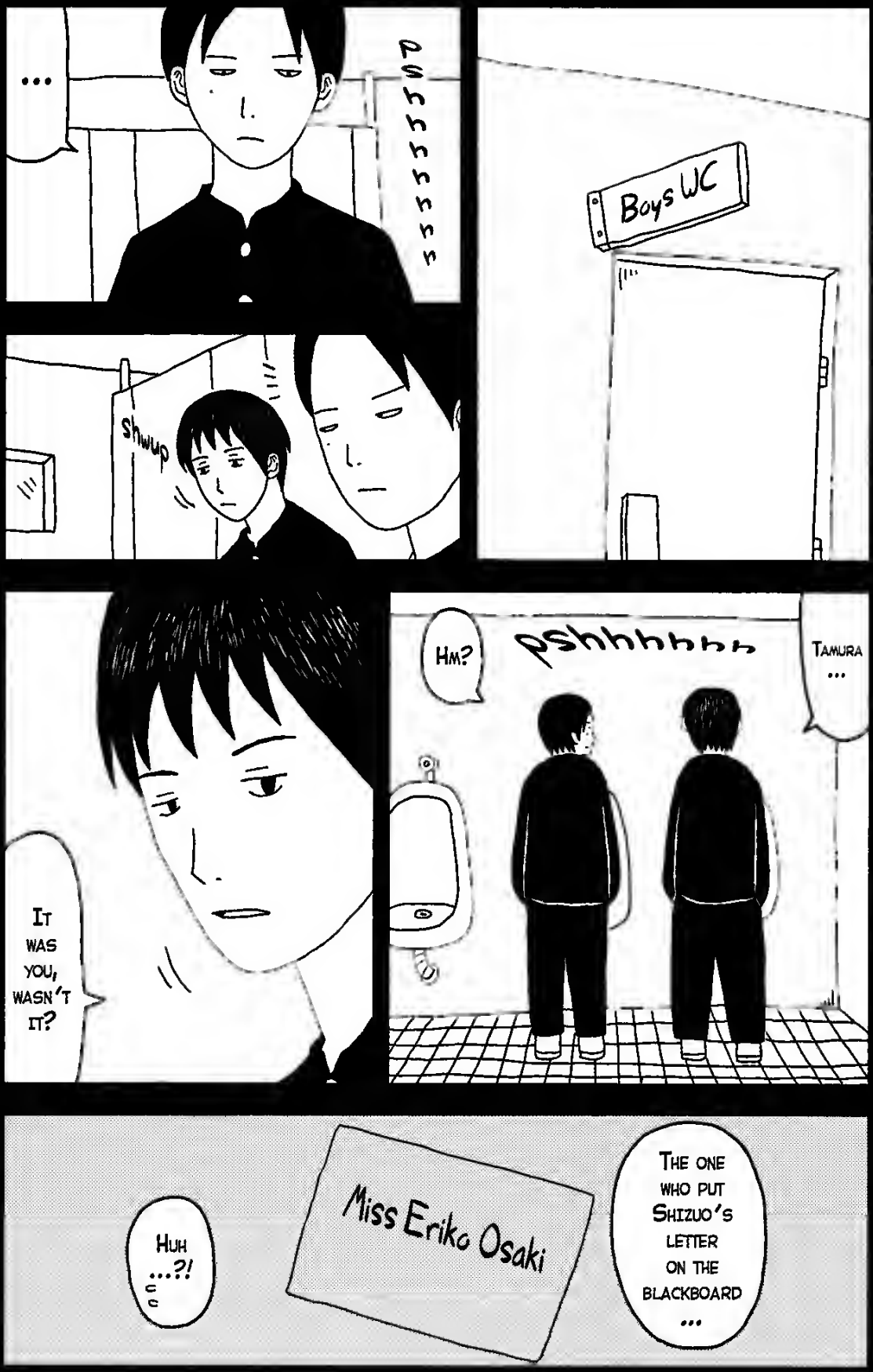

Please excuse this sudden letter.
To: Miss Eriko Osaki
bub
hub

Is that Dazai book interesting?
The Setting Sun
Osamu Dazai
You see, I was wondering...


What do you think?
...we might go to the library together this Sunday.
3-2
If you don't mind, I thought ...
bub
hub
?
The reason I ask is, I'm thinking of reading Osamu Dazai myself.
RATTLE
WAAAAARGH!
From Shizuo Oguro
OSAKI-SAN...
whirl
kvush
kvush
grab

Waaaaah
Uh-oh, she's crying ...
Look what you did!
You're awful, Shizuo!
...as though the world had ended...
Ngh!
Osaki-san wept.
...
Ngh!
Gmph!
Gmph!
She sobbed out loud...

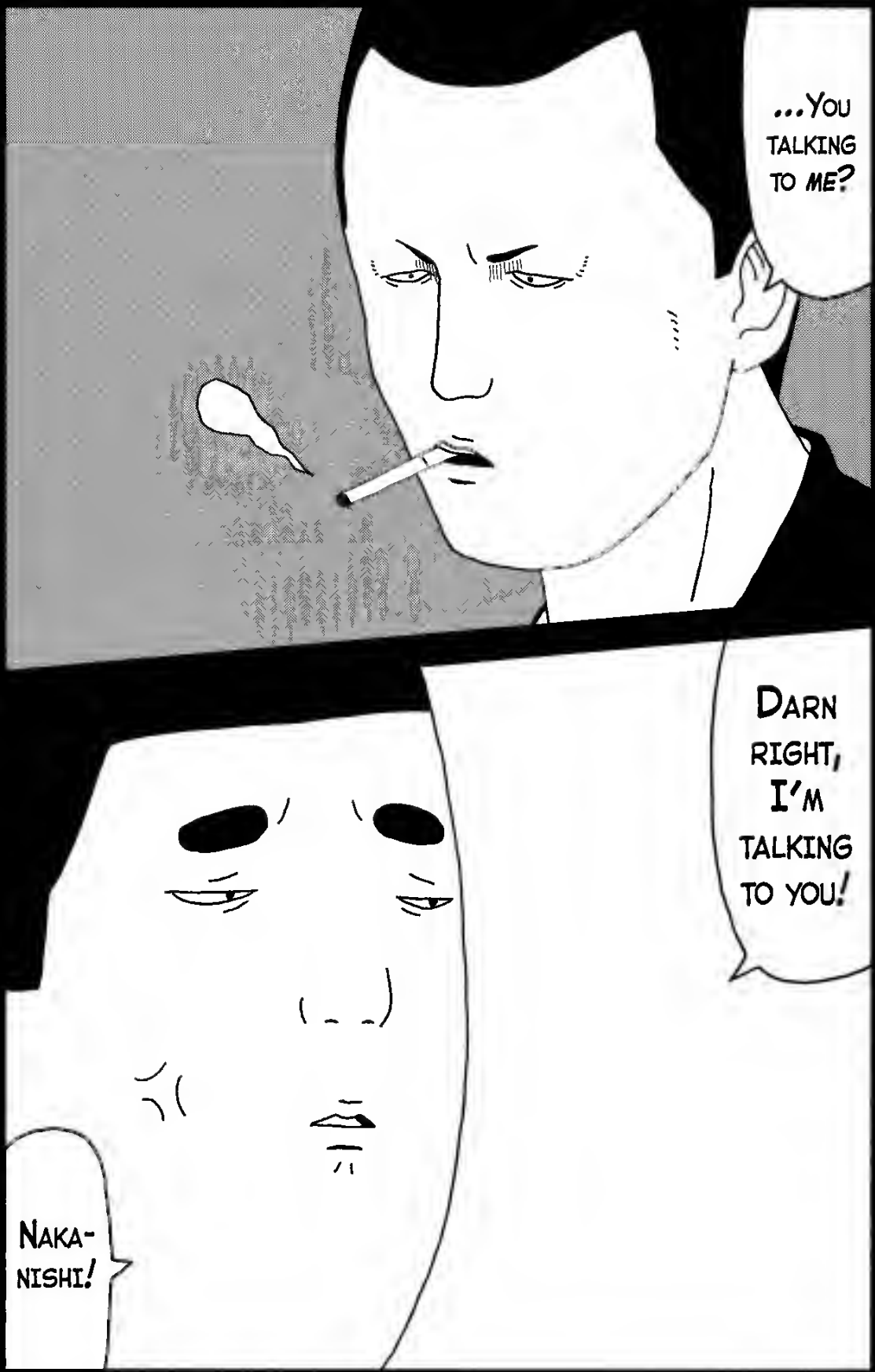
HM?
WHERE'S OSAKI?
STAND UP...
Japanese III
BOW ...
AND BE SEATED.
SHE FELT SICK AND HAD TO GO HOME.
OH.
IT'S SHIZUO'S FAULT!
YEAH, IT SURE IS!
...not a single girl in the class would speak to Shizuo anymore.
...
...
Thanks to this...
stare


...
pshhhhhh
Boys WC
shwup
It was you, wasn't it?
Hm?
pshhhhhh
Tamura ...
Huh ...?!
Miss Eriko Osaki
The one who put Shizuo's letter on the blackboard ...

glare
To Shizuo.
Apolo-gize.
krcc
I'll tell him I'm sorry ...
O-okay ...
Do I need a smoke...
shff
Man ...

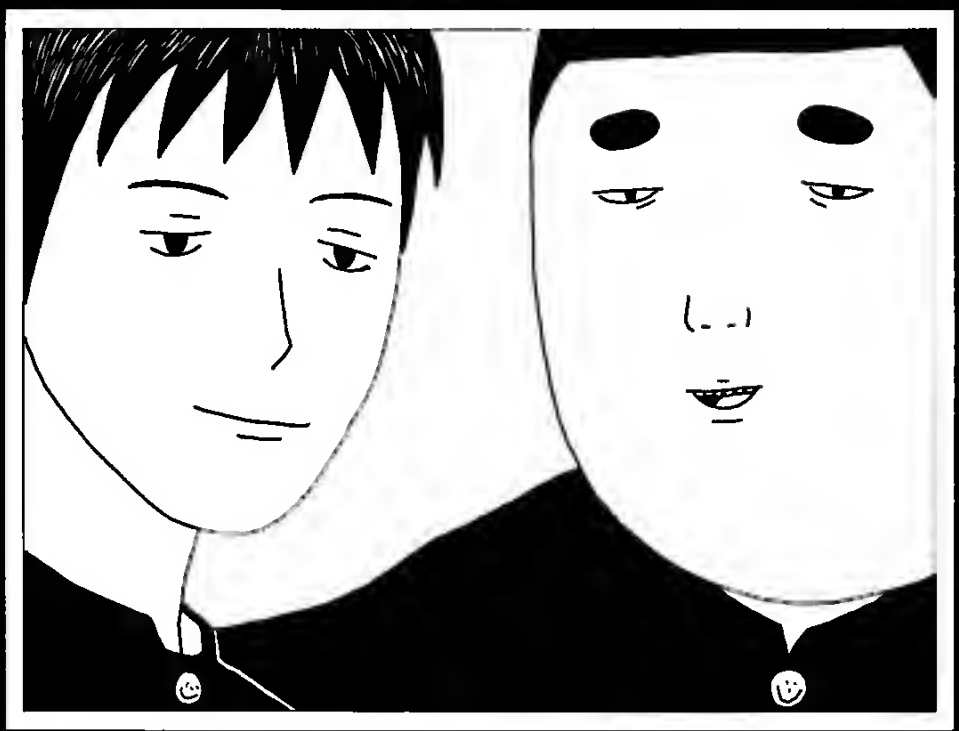
Okay ...
Stand outside and look out for any teachers.
tump
Huh?
Hey. Right man at the right time.
Tamura?
...
What're you gonna do about that parent-teacher conference?
Hm?
hffff
...Miyata
Boys WC
...
No way, for real?!
No parents. His folks abandoned him.
Huh? Don't tell me you didn't know.
...
What's the deal?

SHUT THE HELL UP!
shwaaa
...
SHI-ZUO ...
kree
shwa-aa
WHAT ?!
mwing
I SAID, SHUT THE HELL UP...


...YOU TALKING TO ME?
DARN RIGHT, I'M TALKING TO YOU!
NAKA-NISHI!

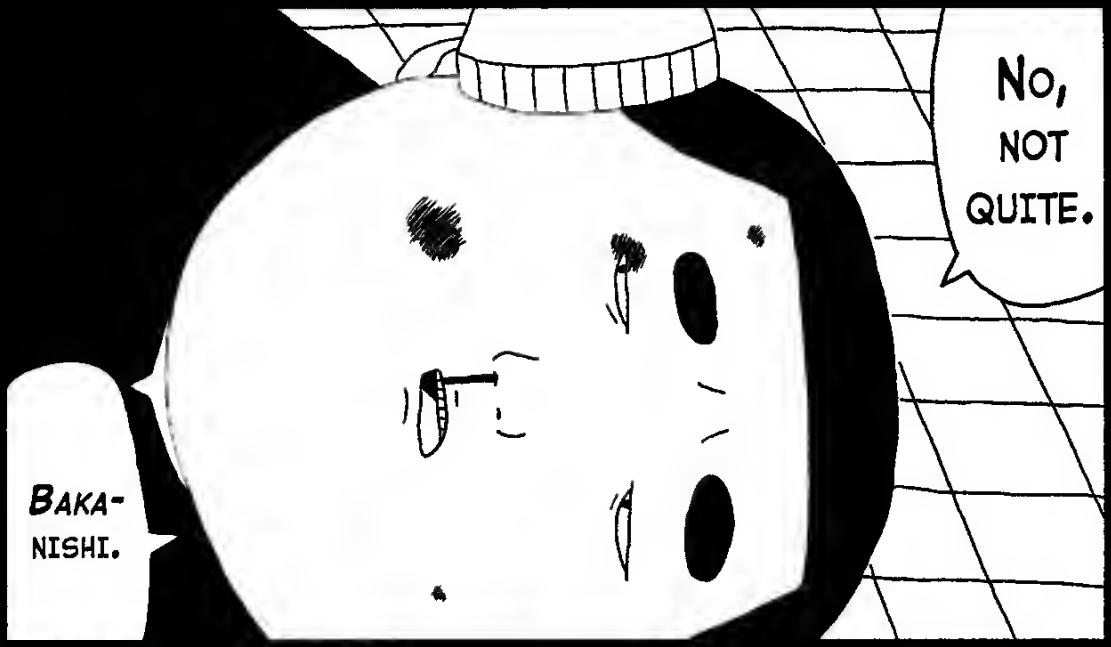
Chapter 20:

I Was Young Once Too, You Know— Part 2

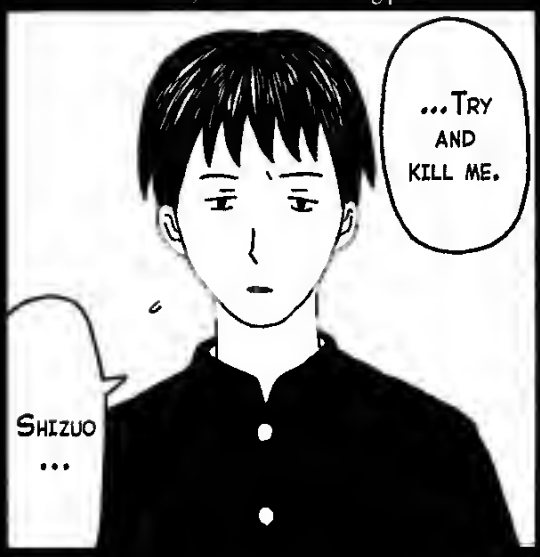


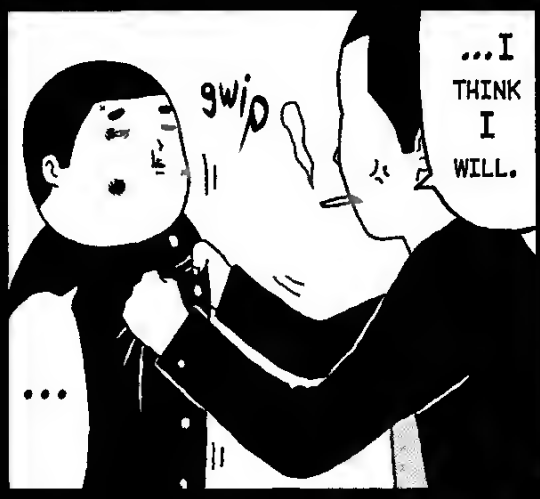
MMMMMGH!
KAKITSUK

gwup
Ow ...!
KWGHHA!
... Listen up!
grind
grind
You got that?
Watch who you pick fights with...



"Baka" means "idiot," hence the insulting pun.



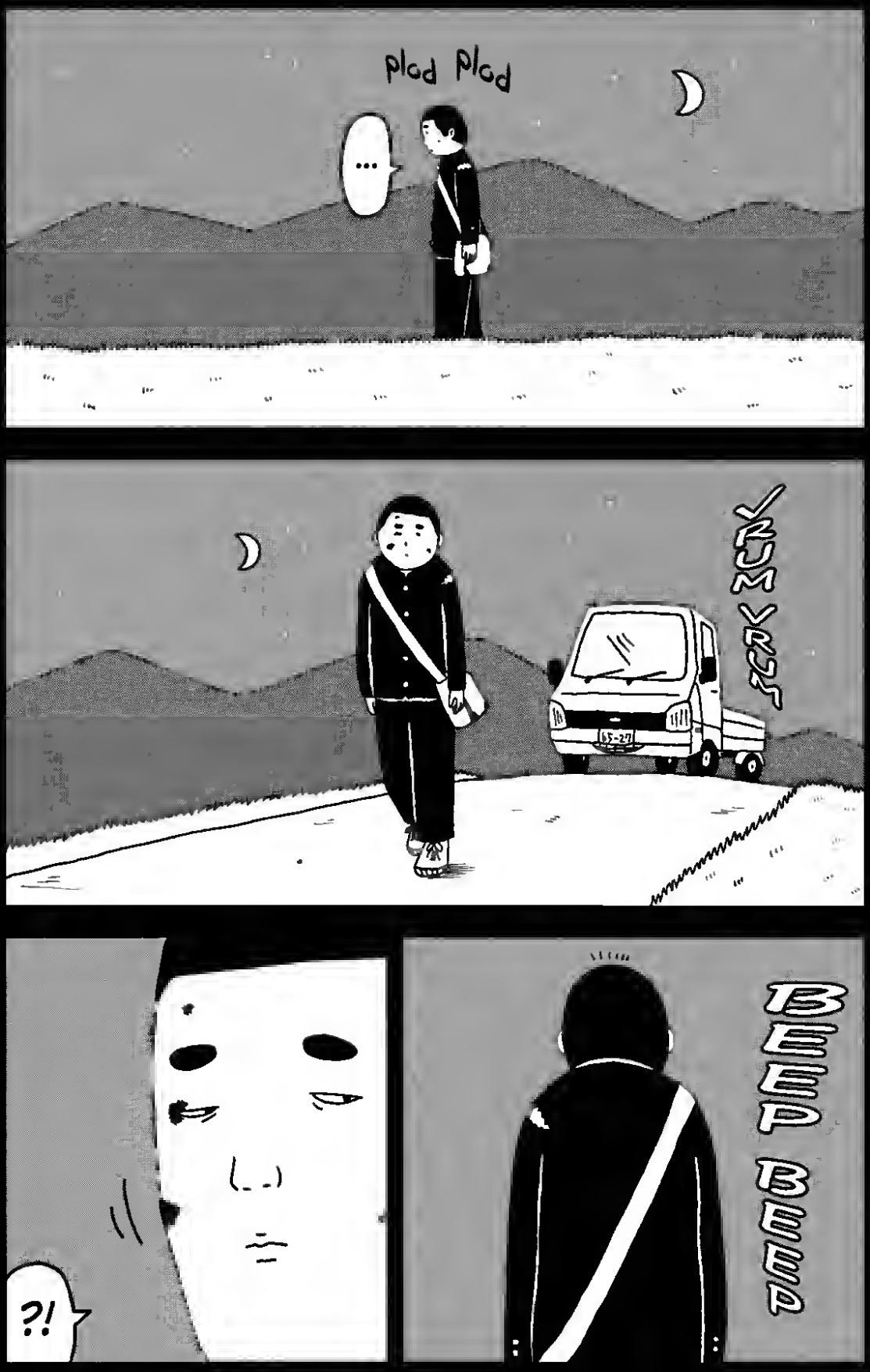


I SAID, LAY OFF HIM.
...
NAKA-NISHI!
klench
LAY OFF HIM ...
HUH?!
RRRAAAAAAAGH!!
ZWOK

kaw
kaw
...
...
...
So hey, Miyata.
Hm?
I guess it takes more than just guts to win a fight...
Guess so...
Wanna do it again? Huh?
unscathed
That guy's a freak of nature, I swear...
Yeah ...

I REALLY APPRECIATE IT...
... THANKS.
...HEY, SHIZUO.
HM?
NAKANISHI'S PISSED ME OFF SINCE WAY BACK, SO...
Has my nosebleed stopped yet...?
...IT'S NOT LIKE I DID IT FOR YOU, OR ANYTHING.
kaw kaw ~ ~
I HAVE TO HELP IN THE FIELDS TODAY.
OH, OKAY ...
NO, I'LL PASS THIS TIME.
...WANNA GO GET SOMETHING TO EAT AT MY DAD'S?

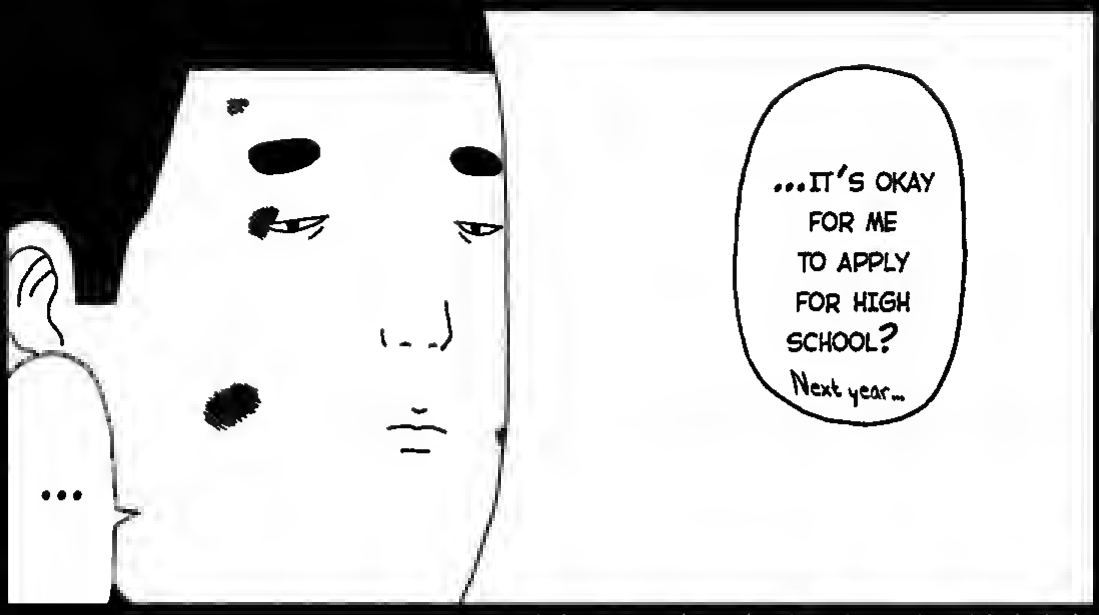
I'M DONE.
Yakitori Shiro
Now serving Udon
Now serving Yakisoba
¥500—
Now serving Udon
¥500—
Yakitori
¥500—
So I guess I'd better be going home...
ktunk
Yeah ...
Okay ... Thanks
thwak thwak
All right. Take care going home.
Yeah.
...Leave your uniform in my room.
thwak
thwak
Yakitori
Shiro
I'll mend it for you by the morning.


plod plod
...
VRUM VRUM
BEEP BEEP
?!

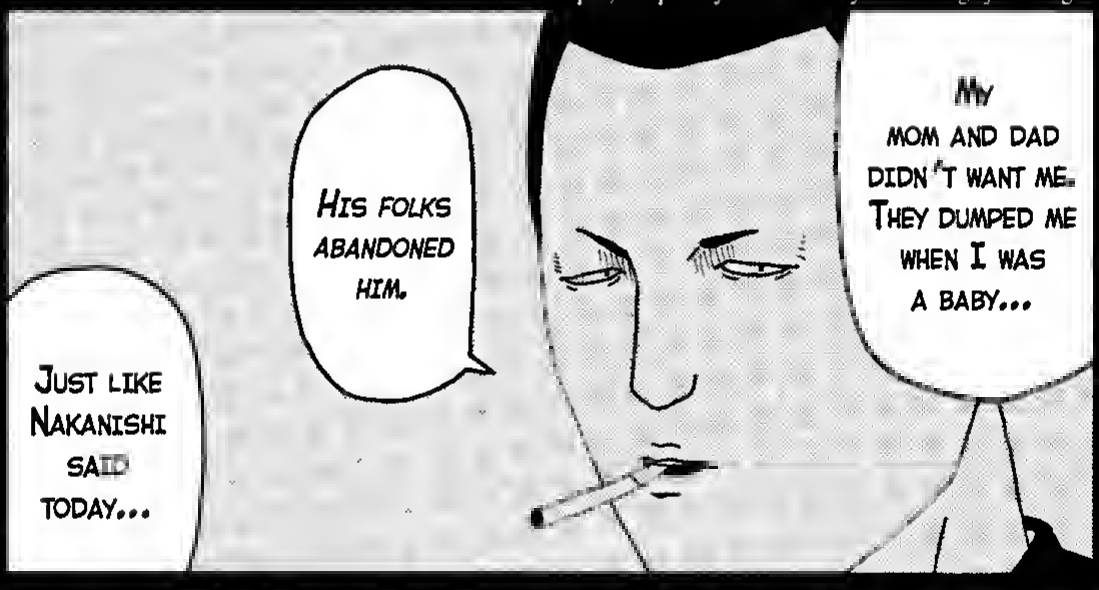
SHIZUO!

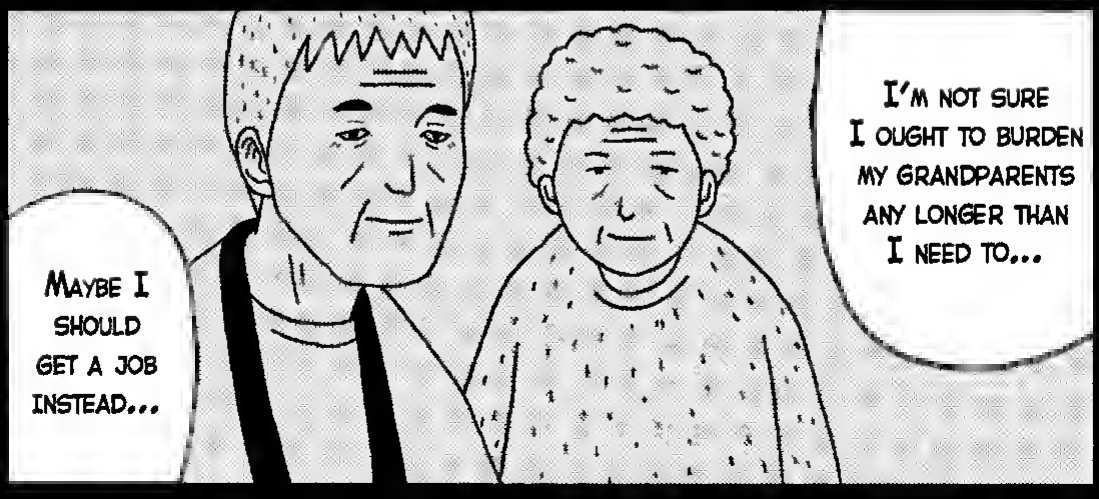
LET'S GO!
Hop in!
MIYATA ...
You...
... That truck...
DOES YOUR GRANDDAD KNOW?
No, I SNUCK OUT.
...
...SO WHADDAYA MEAN "LET'S GO"? WHERE?
WHEREVER, WHO CARES?

VRUM VRUM
VRUM VRUM
...
...
...This isn't like you, Miyata. What happened?
Did Nakanishi crack you in the head or something?
You think ...
...Did you even hear me?



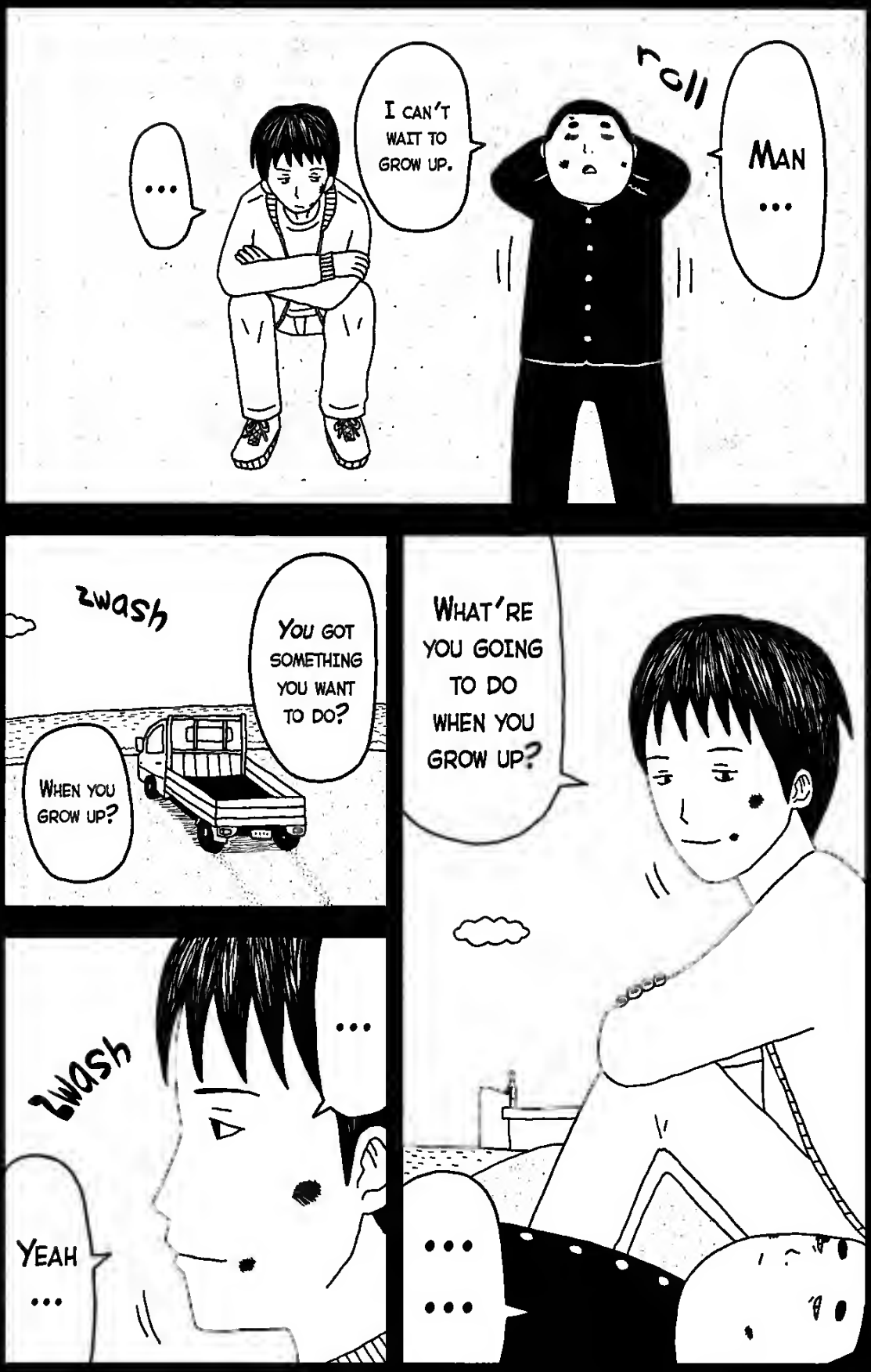
In Japan, compulsory education only runs through junior high.

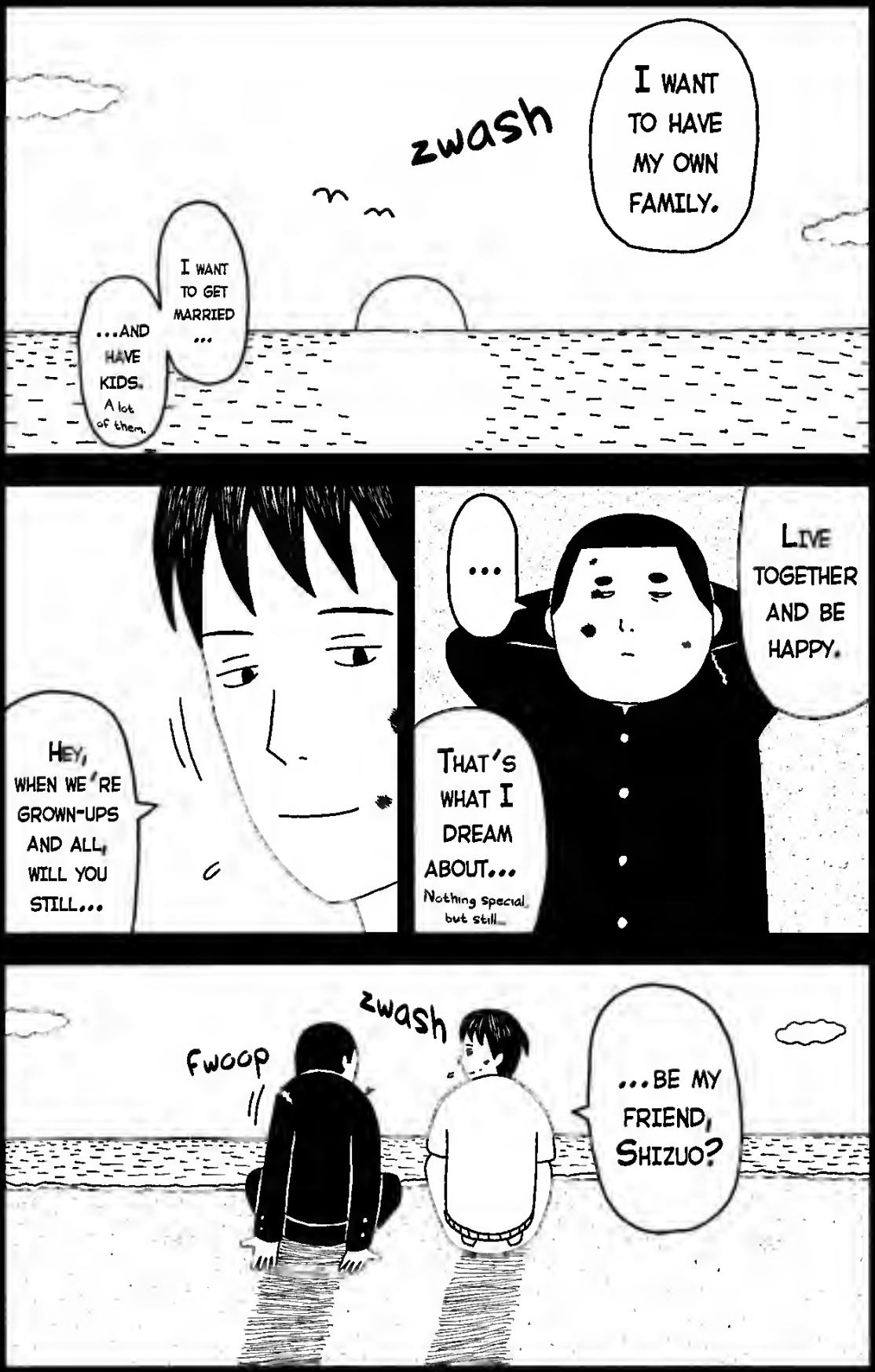




Go to school.
It's okay.
...
...
Who'll I hang out with?
If you aren't there ...

zwash
zwash
HEY, NO BIG DEAL.
I'M USED TO IT. PLUS...
zwash
SORRY TO KEEP YOU OUT ALL NIGHT.
YOU'RE GOING TO GET IN BIG TROUBLE WITH YOUR DAD...
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL...
waaaaah
HOW COME?
I DON'T FEEL LIKE SEEING OSAKI-SAN RIGHT NOW...
...


roll
MAN ...
I CAN'T WAIT TO GROW UP.
...
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO WHEN YOU GROW UP?
...
...
zwash
YOU GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO DO?
WHEN YOU GROW UP?
zwash
...
YEAH ...


I WANT TO HAVE MY OWN FAMILY.
zwash
I WANT TO GET MARRIED ...
...AND HAVE KIDS. A lot of them.
LIVE TOGETHER AND BE HAPPY.
...
THAT'S WHAT I DREAM ABOUT... Nothing special, but still...
HEY, WHEN WE'RE GROWN-UPS AND ALL, WILL YOU STILL...
zwash
FWOOP
...BE MY FRIEND, SHIZUO?

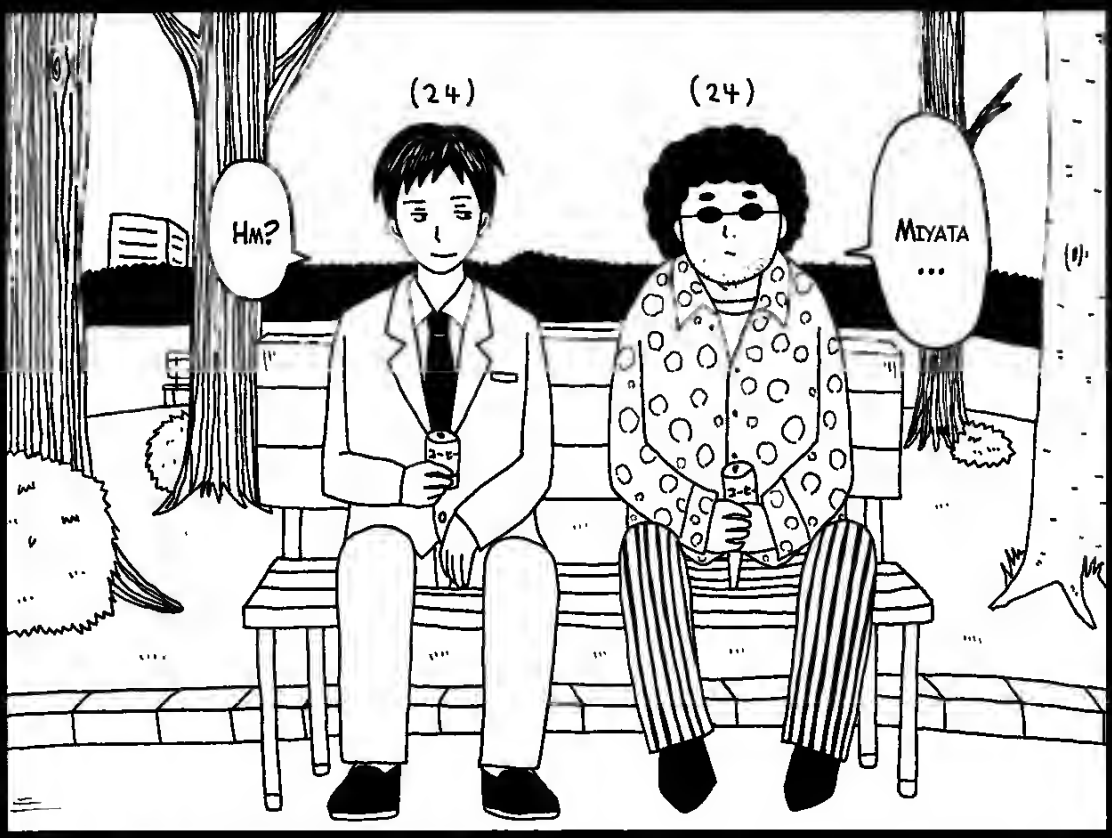
I'LL DIE BY YOUR SIDE, BUDDY.

zwash
No thanks...
Why not?!
Ha ha ...!
It's not funny!
zwash
So! Why don't we go home?
What's with that "so"?
Ha ha ha! Let's go
...

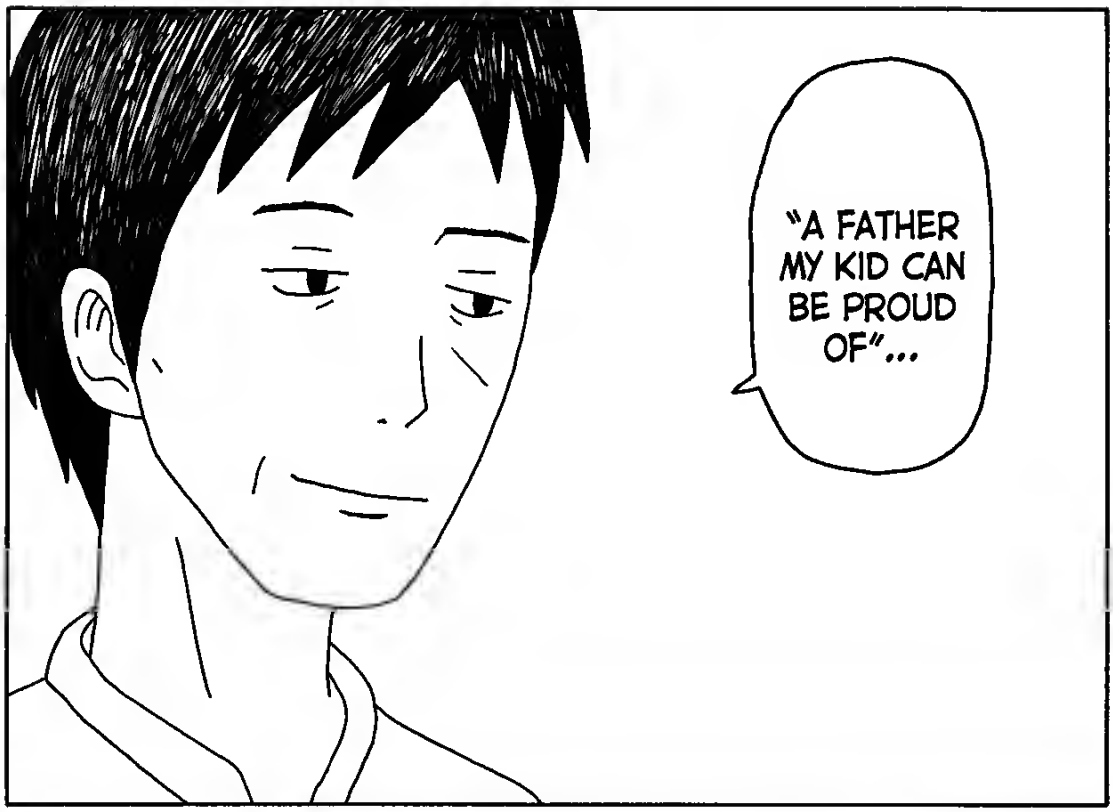
A
B
shwap
I'M SORRY ...
DAD ...
...

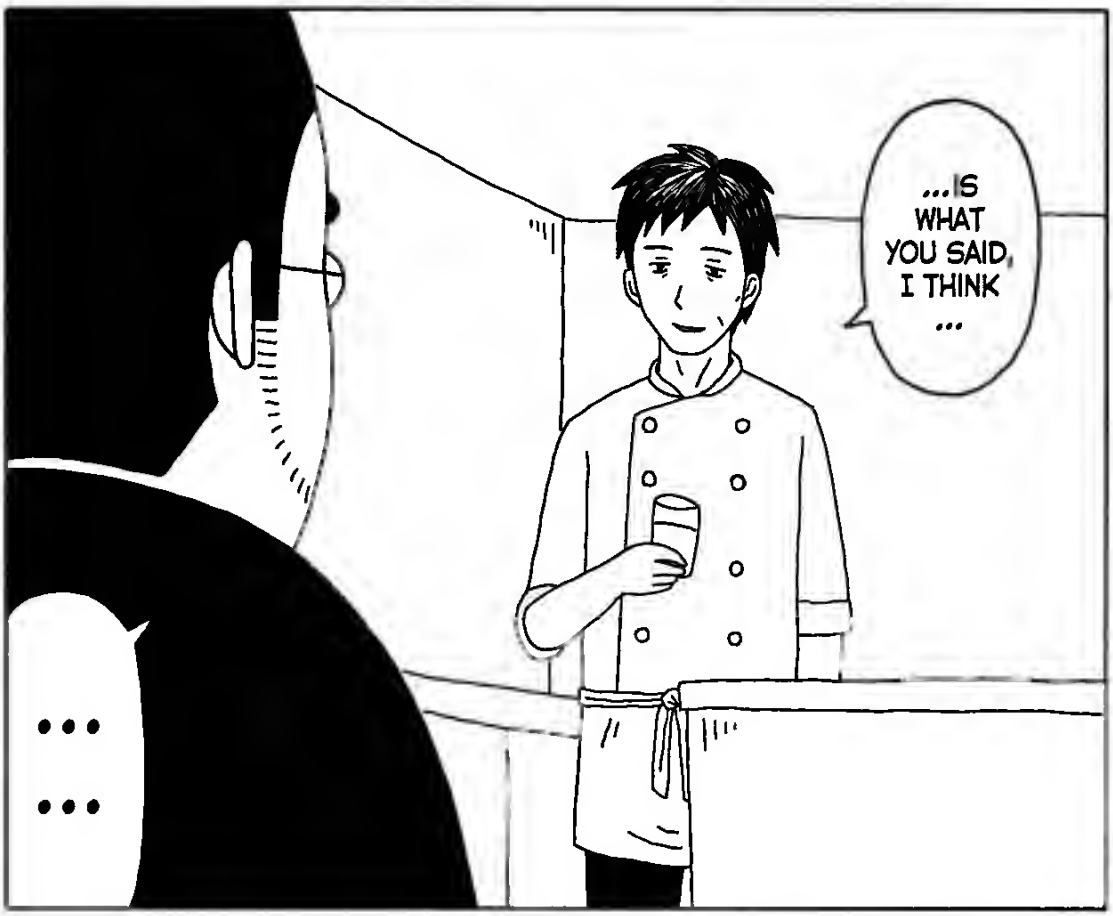
I get a closed fist...?
VERY SORRY ...
THOK
!!
OSAMU ...
GRANDPA ... GRANDMA ...
I...
MMPH ...!
MI-YATA ...
MMPH ...!

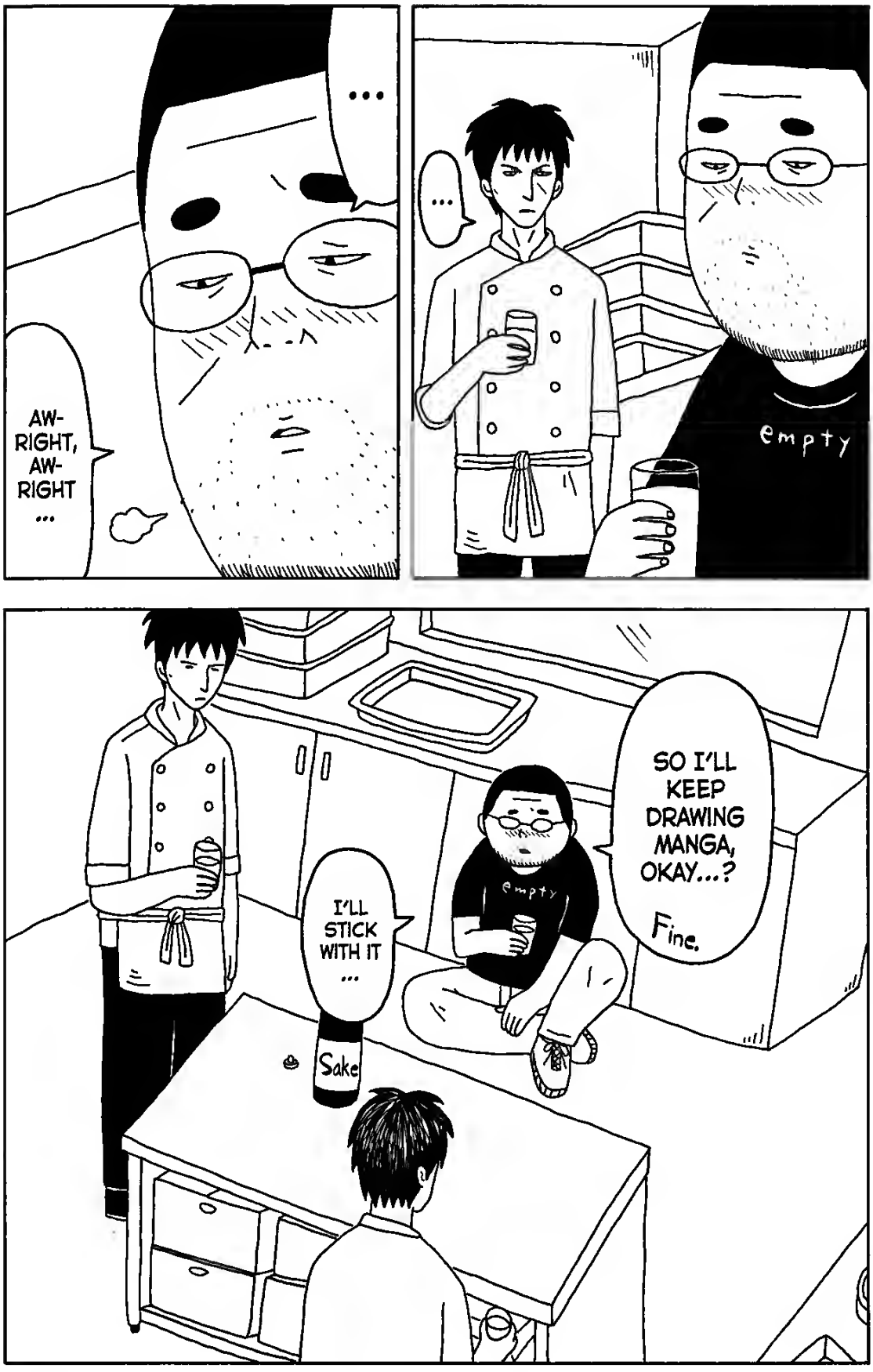
Nine years later.

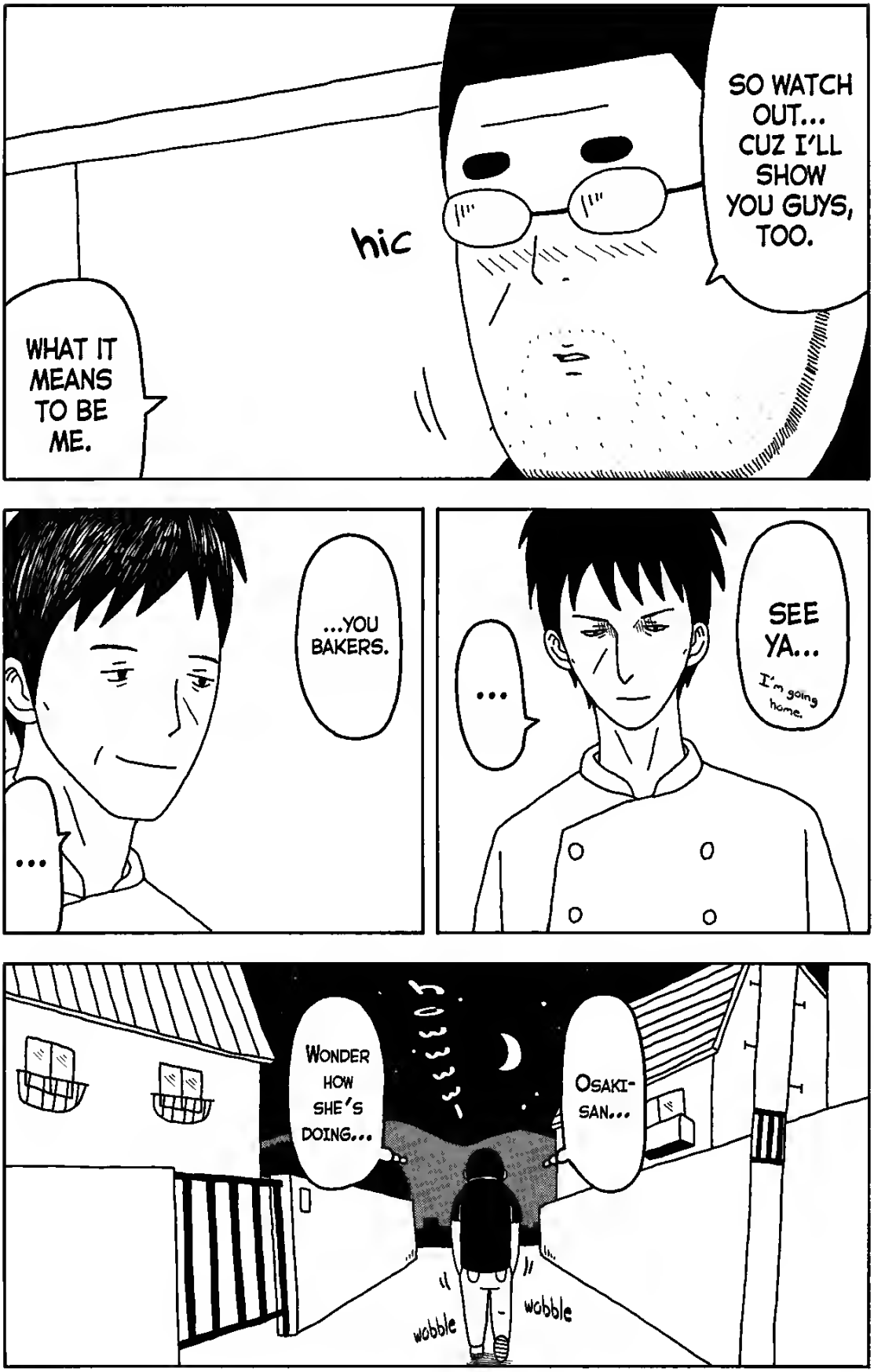


...
...
MARRIED
?
You don't even have a job...
SHE'S PREGNANT ...
I'M GOING TO BE A FATHER...


"A FATHER MY KID CAN BE PROUD OF"...


...IS WHAT YOU SAID, I THINK ...
...
...

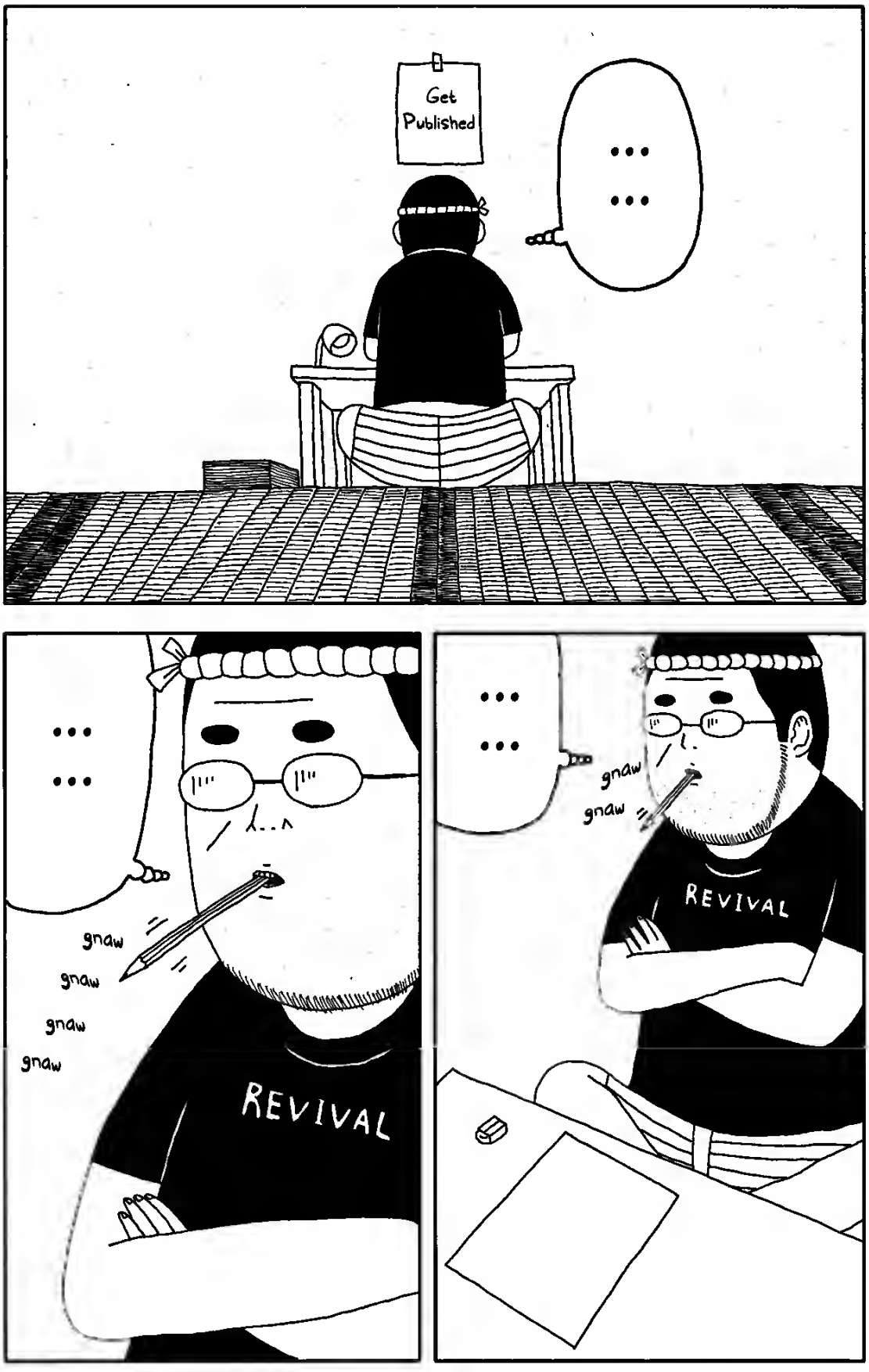

AW-RIGHT, AW-RIGHT ...
...
empty
SO I'LL KEEP DRAWING MANGA, OKAY...?
Fine.
I'LL STICK WITH IT ...
Sake
empty

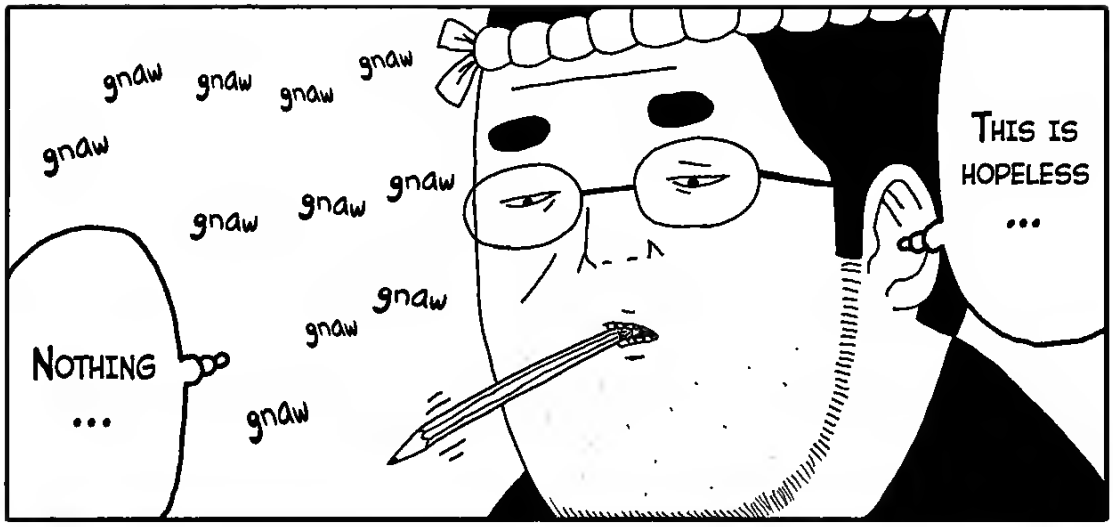

SO WATCH OUT... CUZ I'LL SHOW YOU GUYS, TOO.
hic
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ME.
...YOU BAKERS.
...
SEE YA...
I'm going home.
...
WONDER HOW SHE'S DOING...
OSAKI-SAN...
wobble
wobble

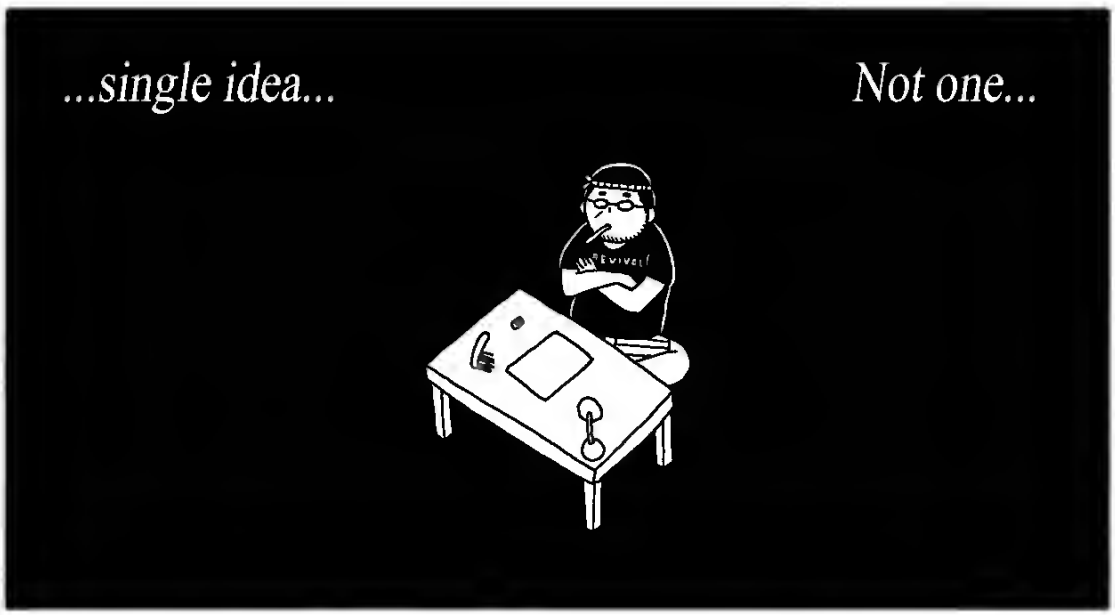
SHOPPP
)

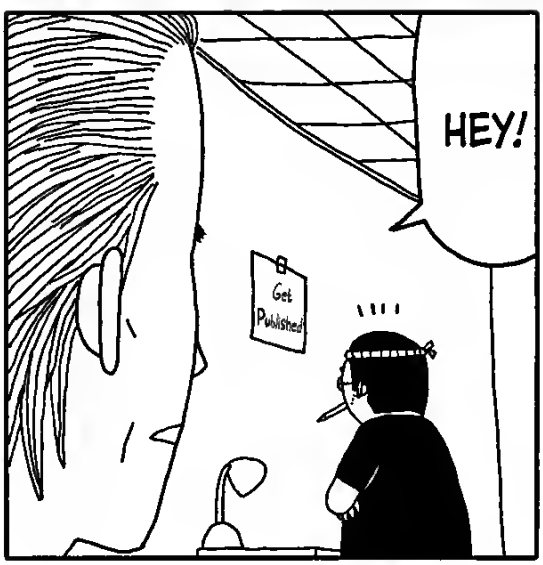
42-year-old man who's
just been slapped by his father.
...
ouch...
empty

Chapter 21:
Faith

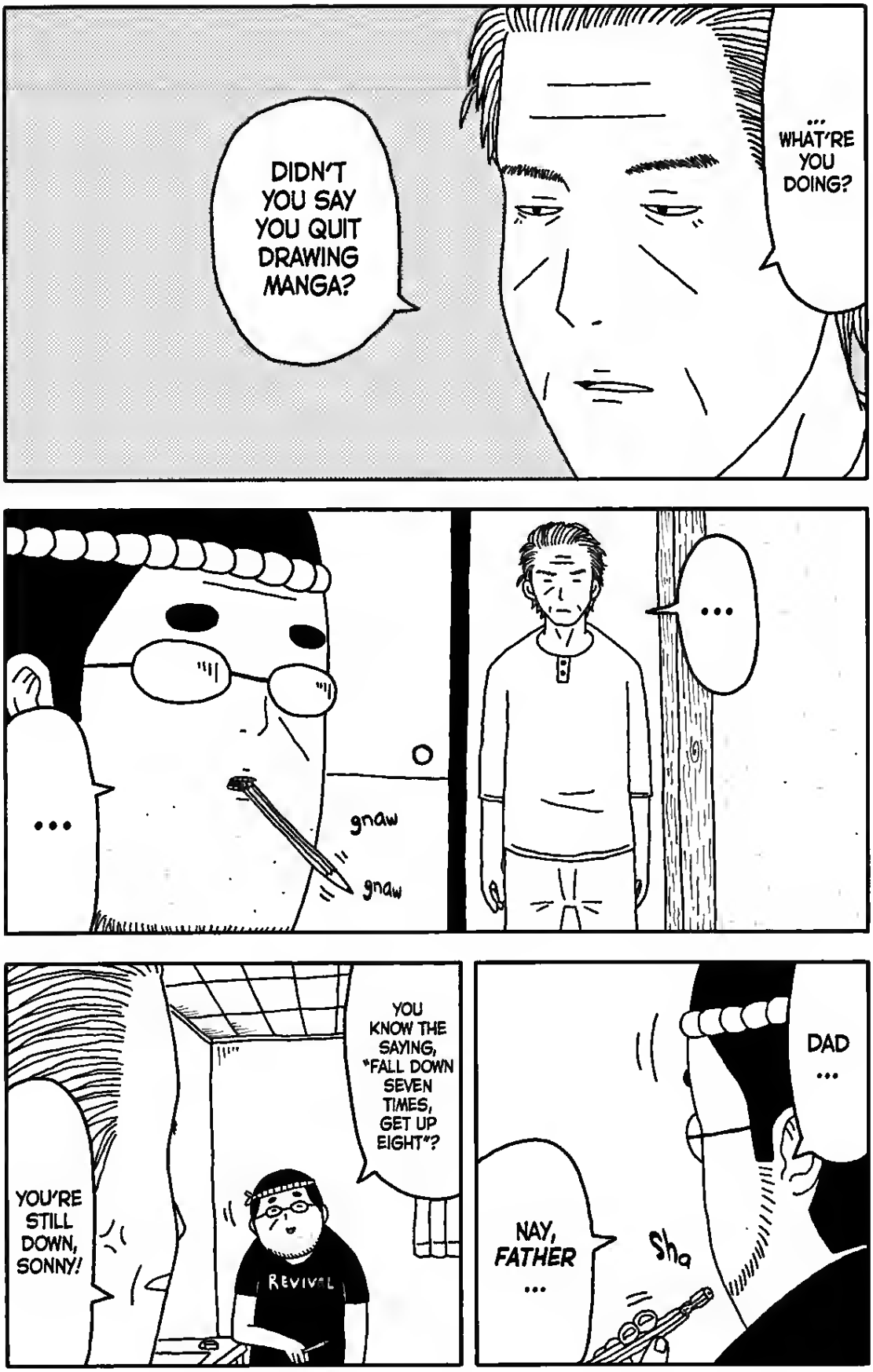

Get Published
...
...
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
REVIVAL
gnaw
gnaw
REVIVAL

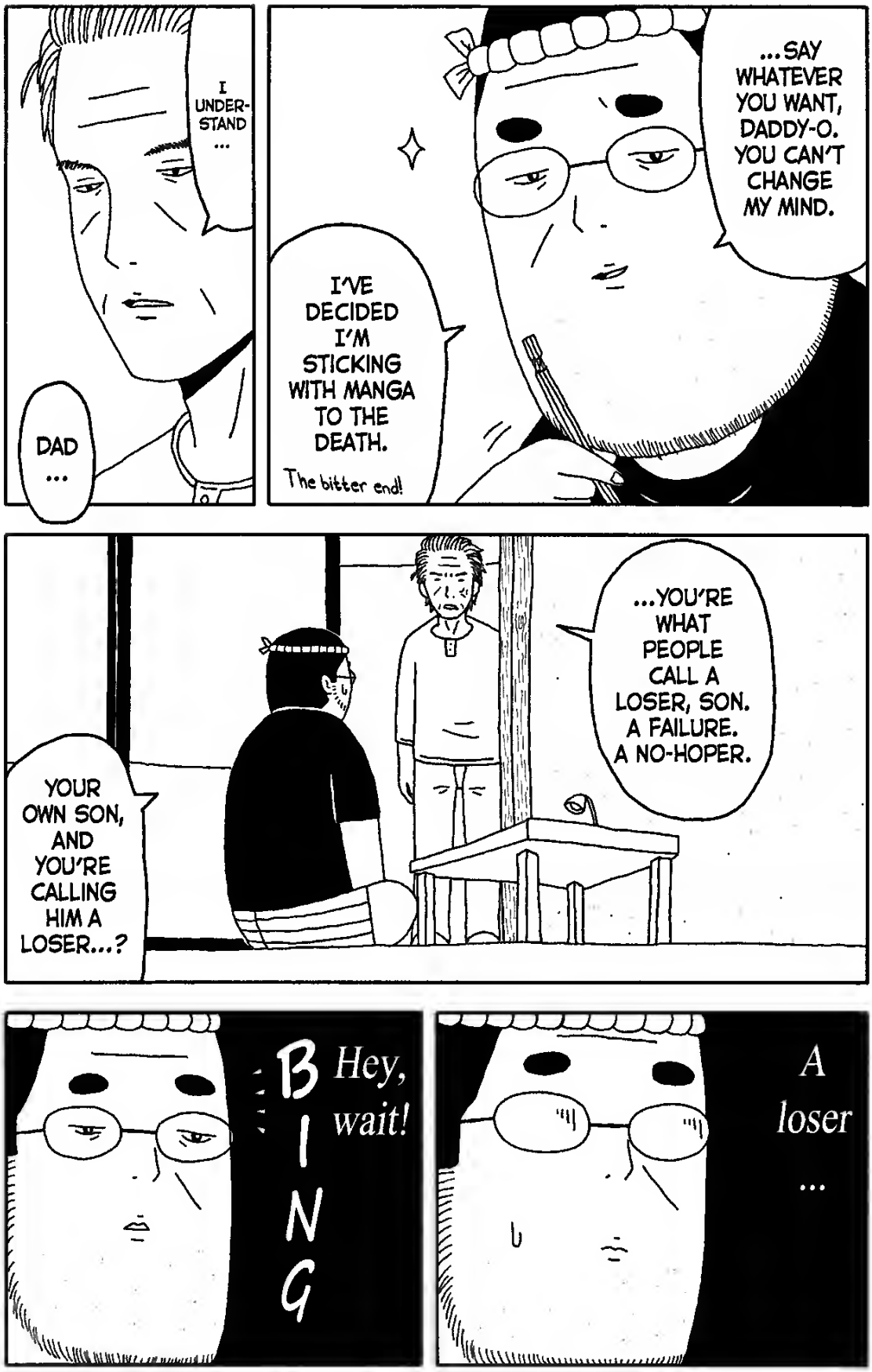

gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
gnaw
NOTHING ...
THIS IS HOPELESS ...

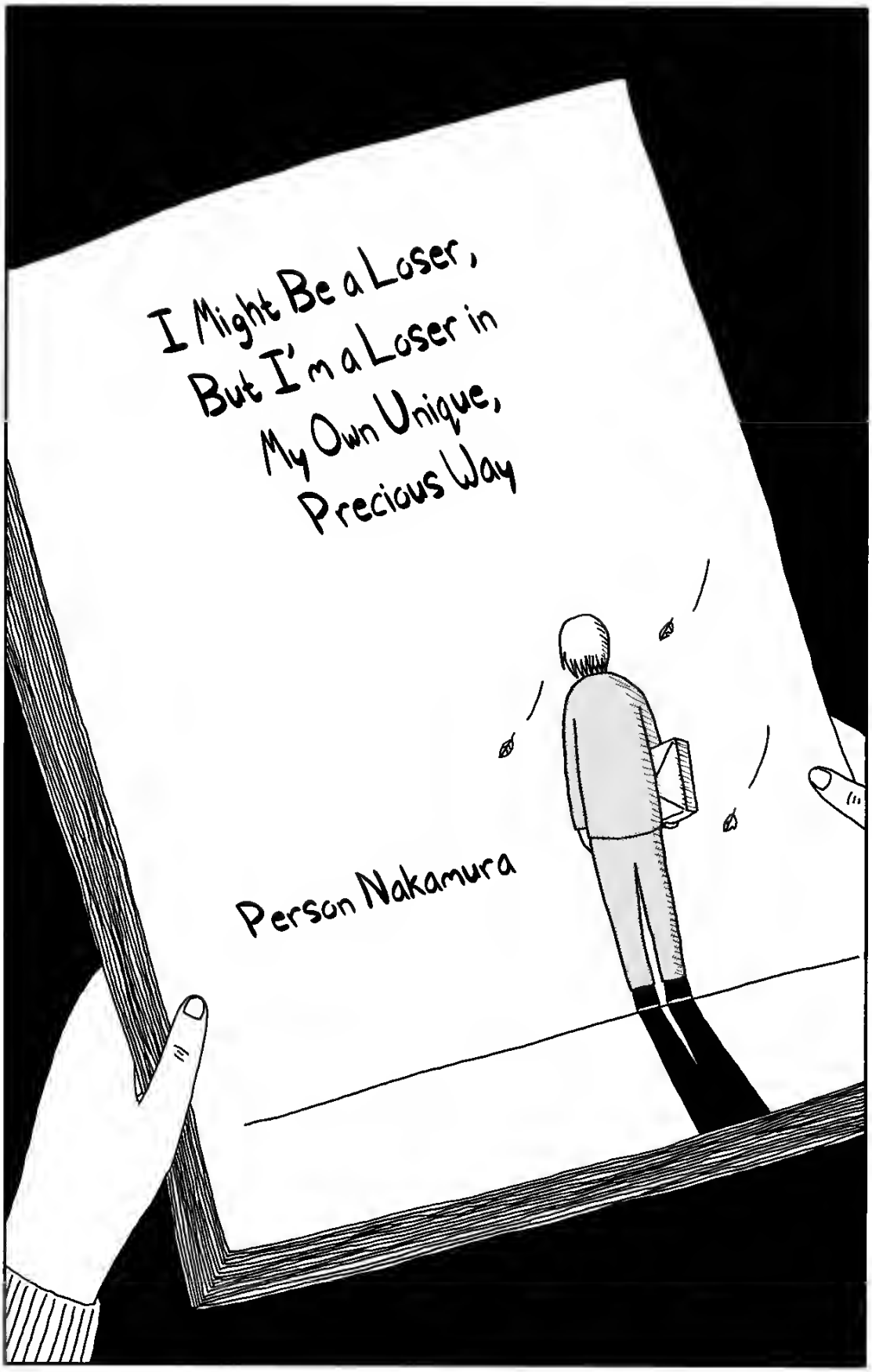

...single idea...
Not one...


HEY!
Get Published!

SSSHP.


DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU QUIT DRAWING MANGA?
... WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
...
gnaw
gnaw
...
YOU KNOW THE SAYING, "FALL DOWN SEVEN TIMES, GET UP EIGHT"?
YOU'RE STILL DOWN, SONNY!
REVIVAL
DAD ...
NAY, FATHER ...
Sha

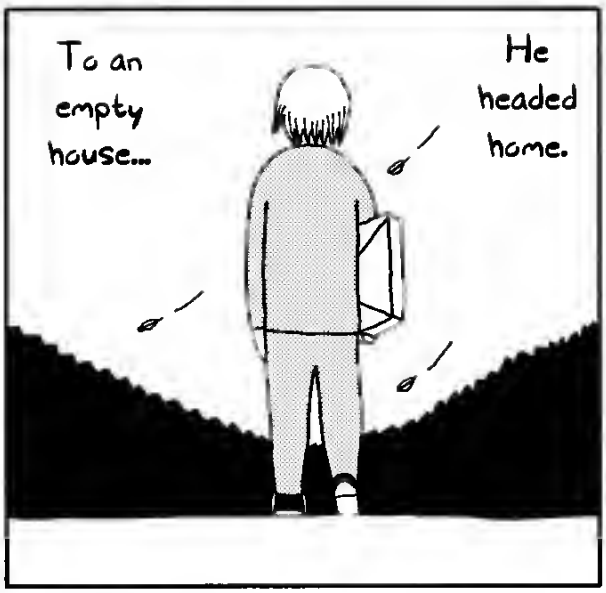

DAD ...
I UNDER-STAND ...
I'VE DECIDED I'M STICKING WITH MANGA TO THE DEATH.
The bitter end!
...SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT, DADDY-O. YOU CAN'T CHANGE MY MIND.
YOUR OWN SON, AND YOU'RE CALLING HIM A LOSER...?
...YOU'RE WHAT PEOPLE CALL A LOSER, SON. A FAILURE. A NO-HOPER.
BING
Hey, wait!
A loser ...

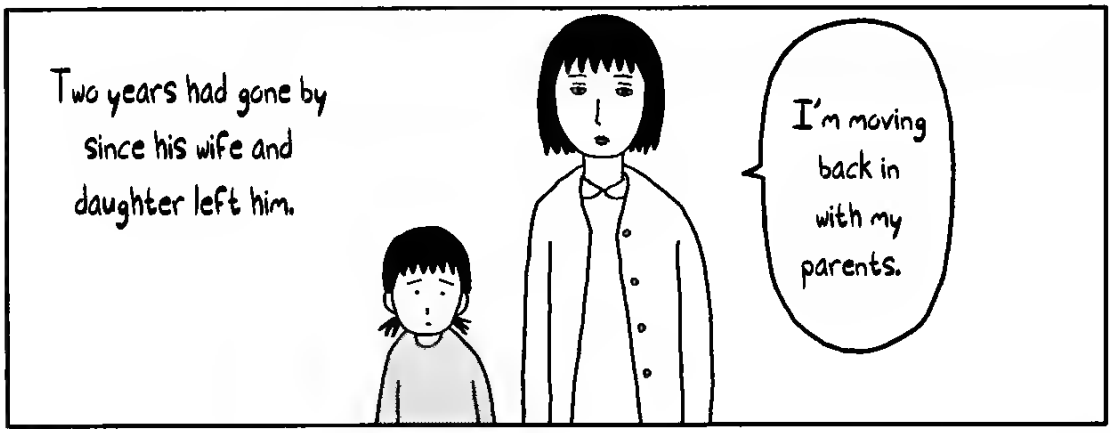

I Might Be a Loser,
But I'm a Loser in
My Own Unique,
Precious Way
Person Nakamura

YES ...
IT'S MY ATTEMPT TO EXPRESS WHO I AM RIGHT NOW— A HEARTFELT PLEA FOR UNDER-STANDING...
...
THAT'S A VERY LONG TITLE...
YOU SEE, UNAMI-SAN... I BELIEVE THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERFECT, FLAWLESS HUMAN BEING ...
...
EVERYBODY HAS FAILINGS. WE MIGHT ACKNOWLEDGE THIS IN OUR HEADS, BUT OUR HEARTS CAN'T ACCEPT IT...
...
WELL, WHY DON'T I START READING IT?
YES, PLEASE DO.
Flap
I Might Be a Loser, But I'm a Loser in My Own Unique, Precious Way
But, as usual, he couldn't sell a single painting.
Nakamura

But, as usual, he couldn't sell a single painting.
Gallery
...
How many galleries had he visited today?

slrrp
slrrp


To an empty house...
He headed home.


Two years had gone by since his wife and daughter left him.
I'm moving back in with my parents.

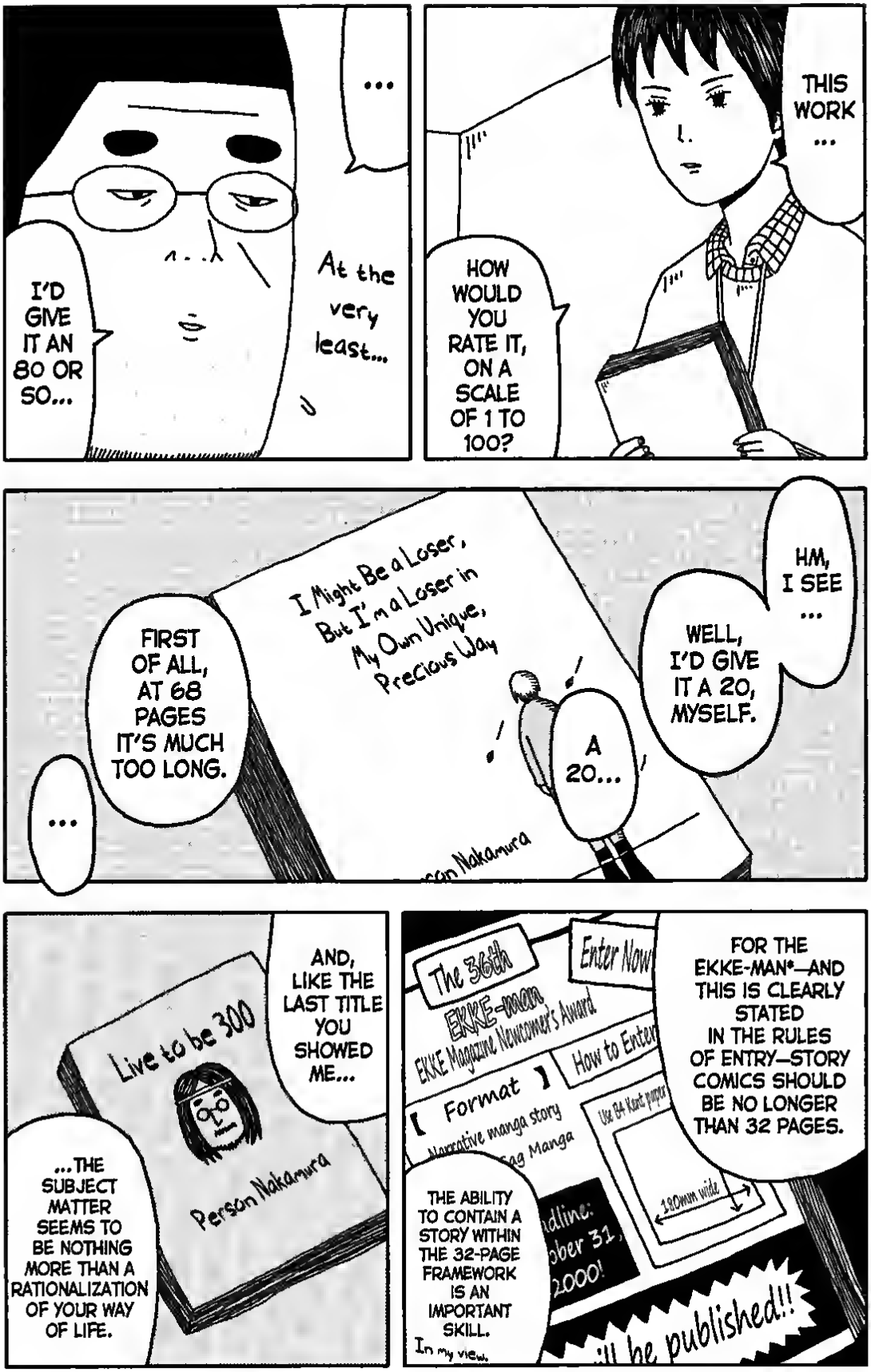
...
His friends told him to give up painting.
You ought to look for a steady job.
And yet, he continued to paint.
29
...but he was a loser in his own unique, precious way.
He might have been a loser...

Flap
... ...
... ...
Flap

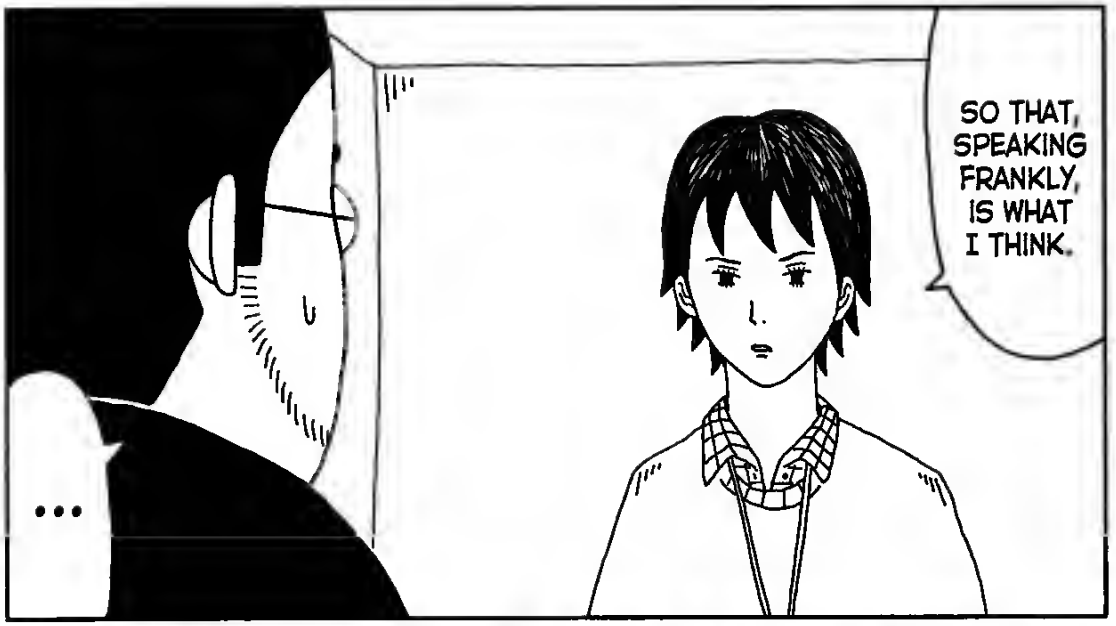
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING ...
NOT AT ALL.
NEW

...
Flap
Flap
NEW
Flap
Flap

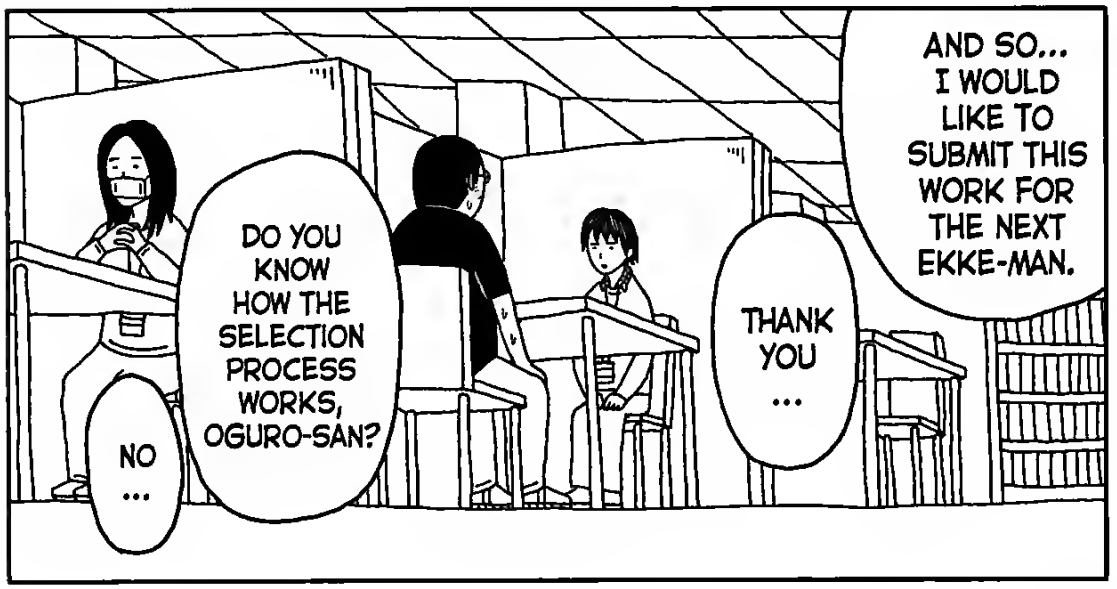
OGURO-SAN...
YES?

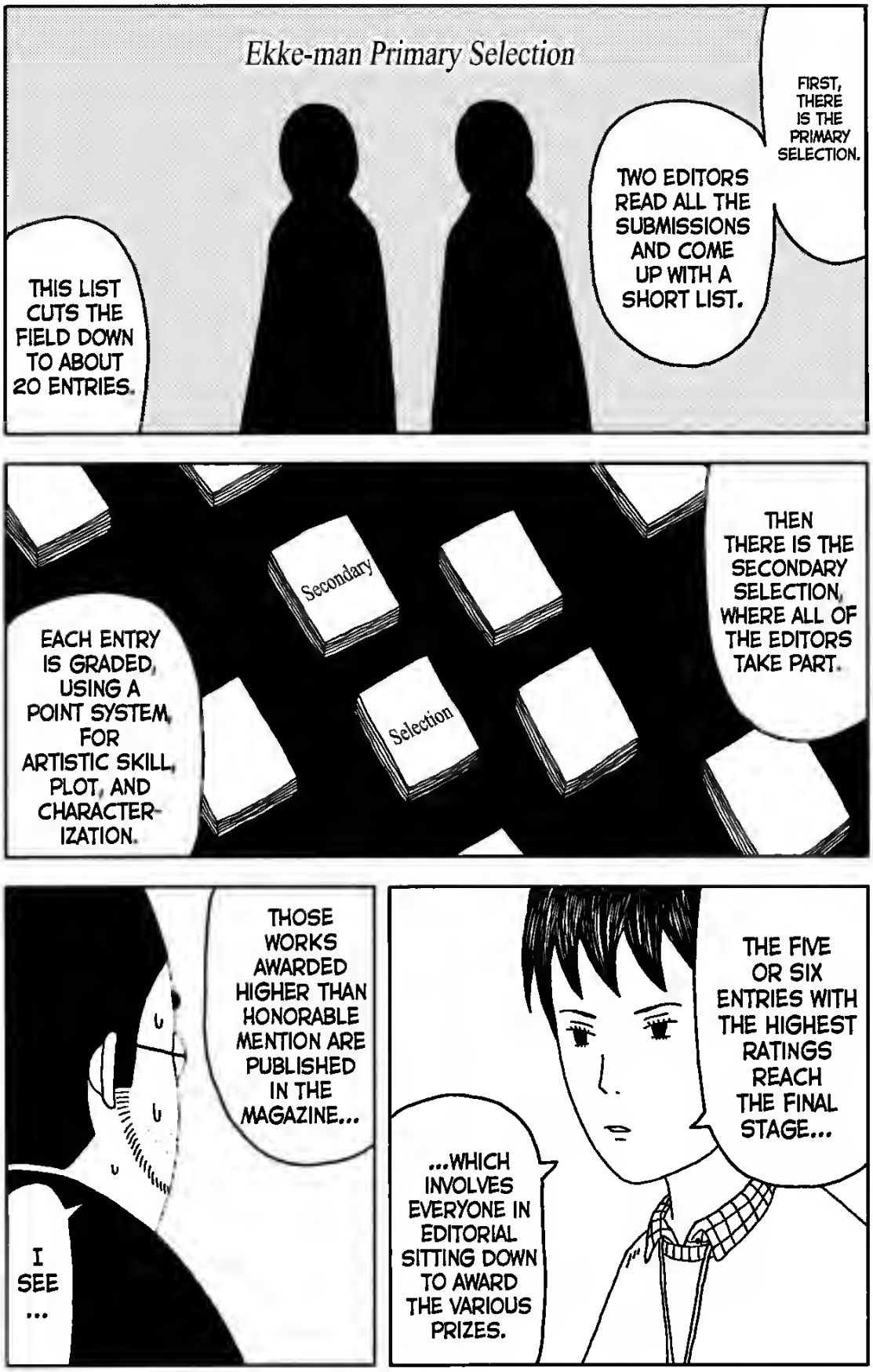

...
At the very least...
I'D GIVE IT AN 80 OR SO...
THIS WORK ...
HOW WOULD YOU RATE IT, ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 100?
I Might Be a Loser, But I'm a Loser in My Own Unique, Precious Way
Person Nakamura
FIRST OF ALL, AT 68 PAGES IT'S MUCH TOO LONG.
...
A 20...
WELL, I'D GIVE IT A 20, MYSELF.
HM, I SEE ...
Live to be 300
Person Nakamura
AND, LIKE THE LAST TITLE YOU SHOWED ME...
...THE SUBJECT MATTER SEEMS TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN A RATIONALIZATION OF YOUR WAY OF LIFE.
The 36th EKKE-man
EKKE Magazine Newcomer's Award
Enter Now!
How to Enter
Format
Narrative manga story
Gag Manga
Use B4 blank paper
190mm wide
Deadline: October 31, 2000!
...ll be published!!
THE ABILITY TO CONTAIN A STORY WITHIN THE 32-PAGE FRAMEWORK IS AN IMPORTANT SKILL. In my view...
FOR THE EKKE-MAN*—AND THIS IS CLEARLY STATED IN THE RULES OF ENTRY—STORY COMICS SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN 32 PAGES.

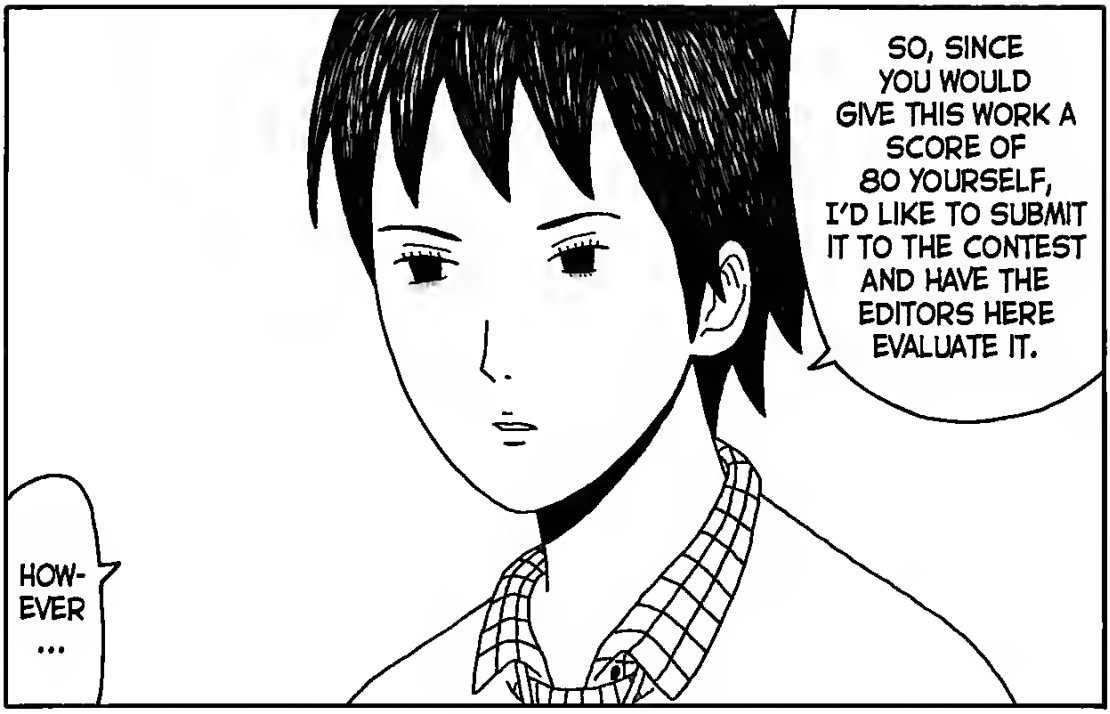
*Newcomer's Award in EKKE magazine's manga contest.

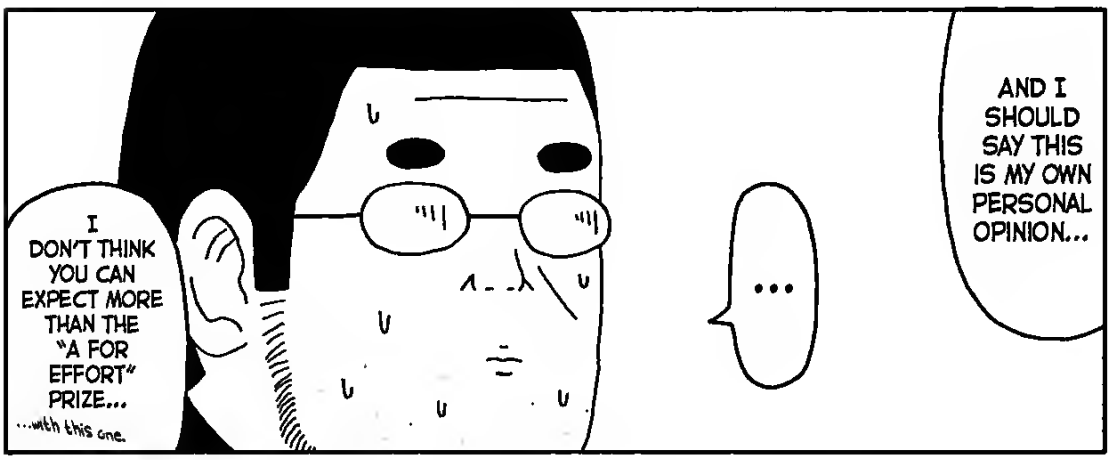

SO THAT, SPEAKING FRANKLY, IS WHAT I THINK.
...

HOW-EVER ...
IT'S MERELY MY OWN PERSONAL OPINION.


AND SO... I WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT THIS WORK FOR THE NEXT EKKE-MAN.
THANK YOU ...
DO YOU KNOW HOW THE SELECTION PROCESS WORKS, OGURO-SAN?
NO ...

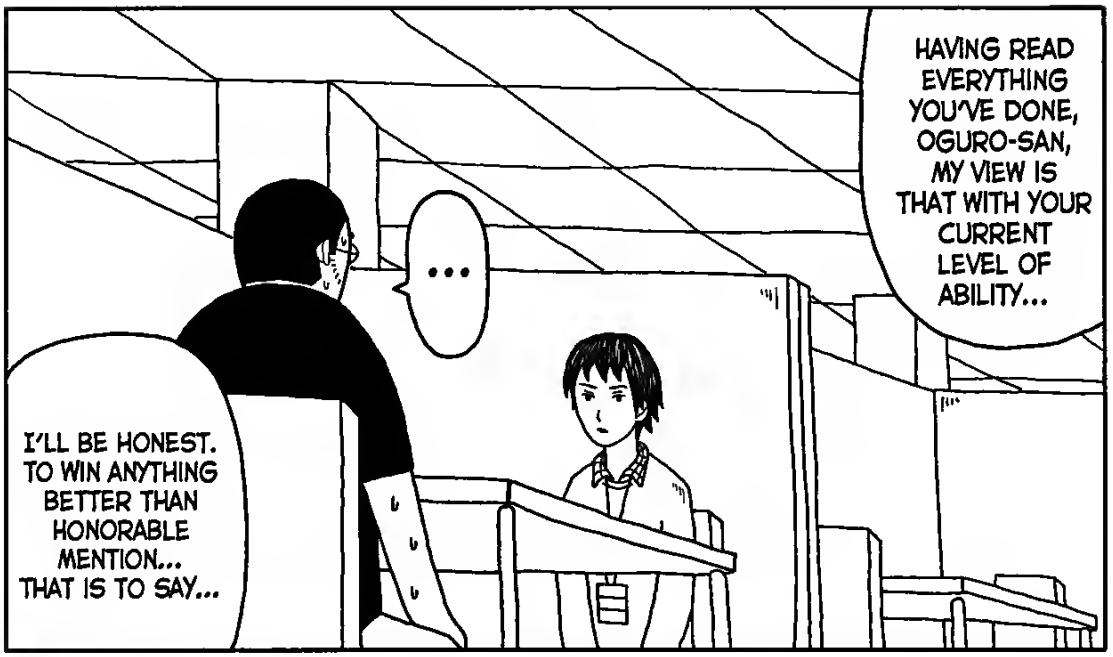

Ekke-man Primary Selection
FIRST, THERE IS THE PRIMARY SELECTION.
TWO EDITORS READ ALL THE SUBMISSIONS AND COME UP WITH A SHORT LIST.
THIS LIST CUTS THE FIELD DOWN TO ABOUT 20 ENTRIES.
THEN THERE IS THE SECONDARY SELECTION, WHERE ALL OF THE EDITORS TAKE PART.
Secondary
Selection
EACH ENTRY IS GRADED, USING A POINT SYSTEM, FOR ARTISTIC SKILL, PLOT, AND CHARACTER-IZATION.
THOSE WORKS AWARDED HIGHER THAN HONORABLE MENTION ARE PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE...
I SEE ...
THE FIVE OR SIX ENTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATINGS REACH THE FINAL STAGE...
...WHICH INVOLVES EVERYONE IN EDITORIAL SITTING DOWN TO AWARD THE VARIOUS PRIZES.


SO, SINCE YOU WOULD GIVE THIS WORK A SCORE OF 80 YOURSELF, I'D LIKE TO SUBMIT IT TO THE CONTEST AND HAVE THE EDITORS HERE EVALUATE IT.
HOW-EVER ...

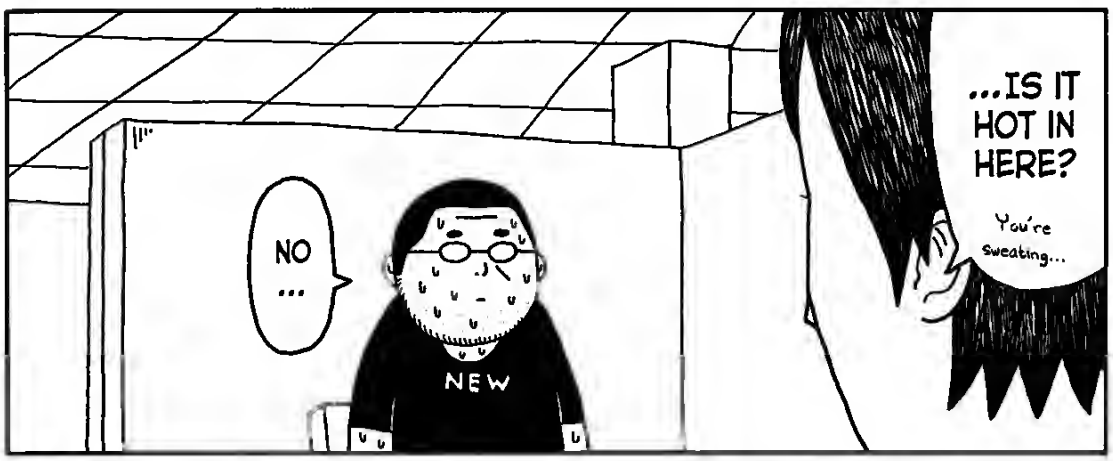

AND I SHOULD SAY THIS IS MY OWN PERSONAL OPINION...
...
I DON'T THINK YOU CAN EXPECT MORE THAN THE "A FOR EFFORT" PRIZE...
...with this one.

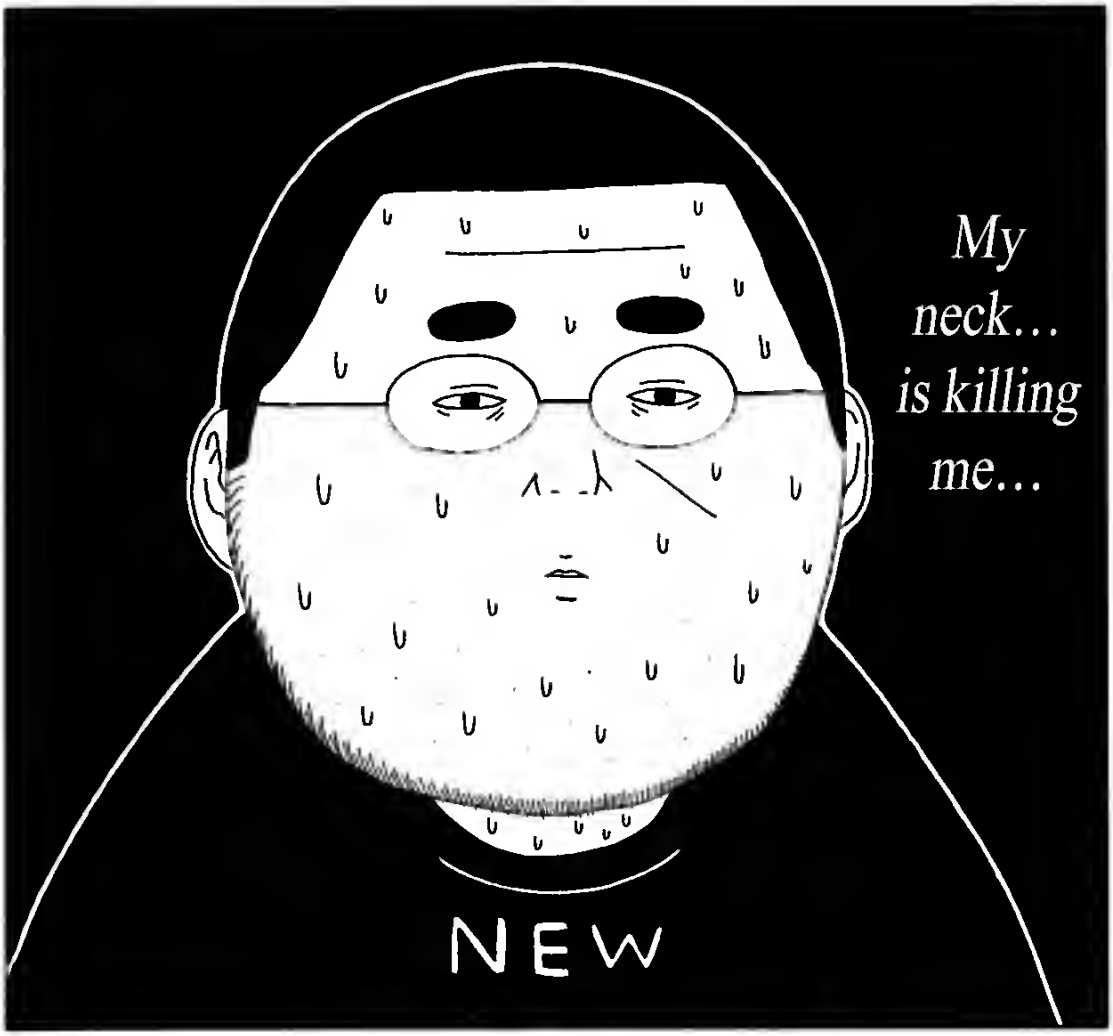
Murakami-san
YOUR FORMER EDITOR, MURAKAMI-SAN, KEPT COPIES OF EVERYTHING, SO...
AH, MISTER MURA-KAMI ...
EKKE

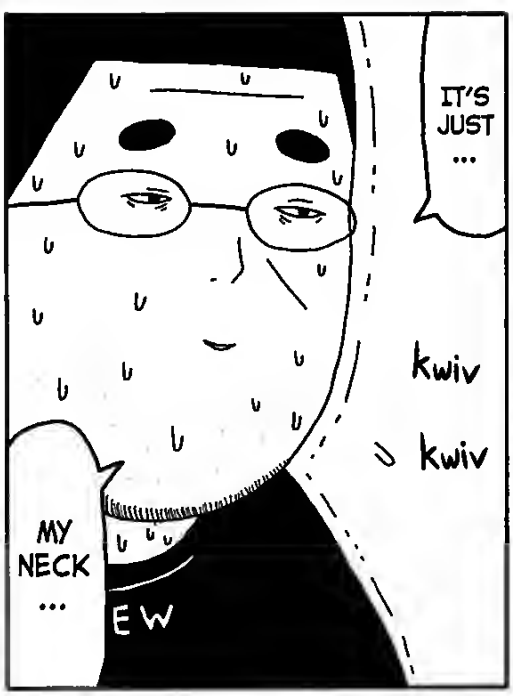
48 in all.
I'VE TAKEN THE TIME TO READ ALL YOUR EARLIER STORIES AS WELL, OGURO-SAN.
7 years' worth.
OH, UH... TH-THANK YOU...
First Love
Now is the Time!
You Talkin' to Me?
The Oguro Way
Kaleidescope
Shizuo Oguro
Person Nakamura
So Far...
And From Now On
Boss


HAVING READ EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE, OGURO-SAN, MY VIEW IS THAT WITH YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF ABILITY...
...
I'LL BE HONEST. TO WIN ANYTHING BETTER THAN HONORABLE MENTION... THAT IS TO SAY...

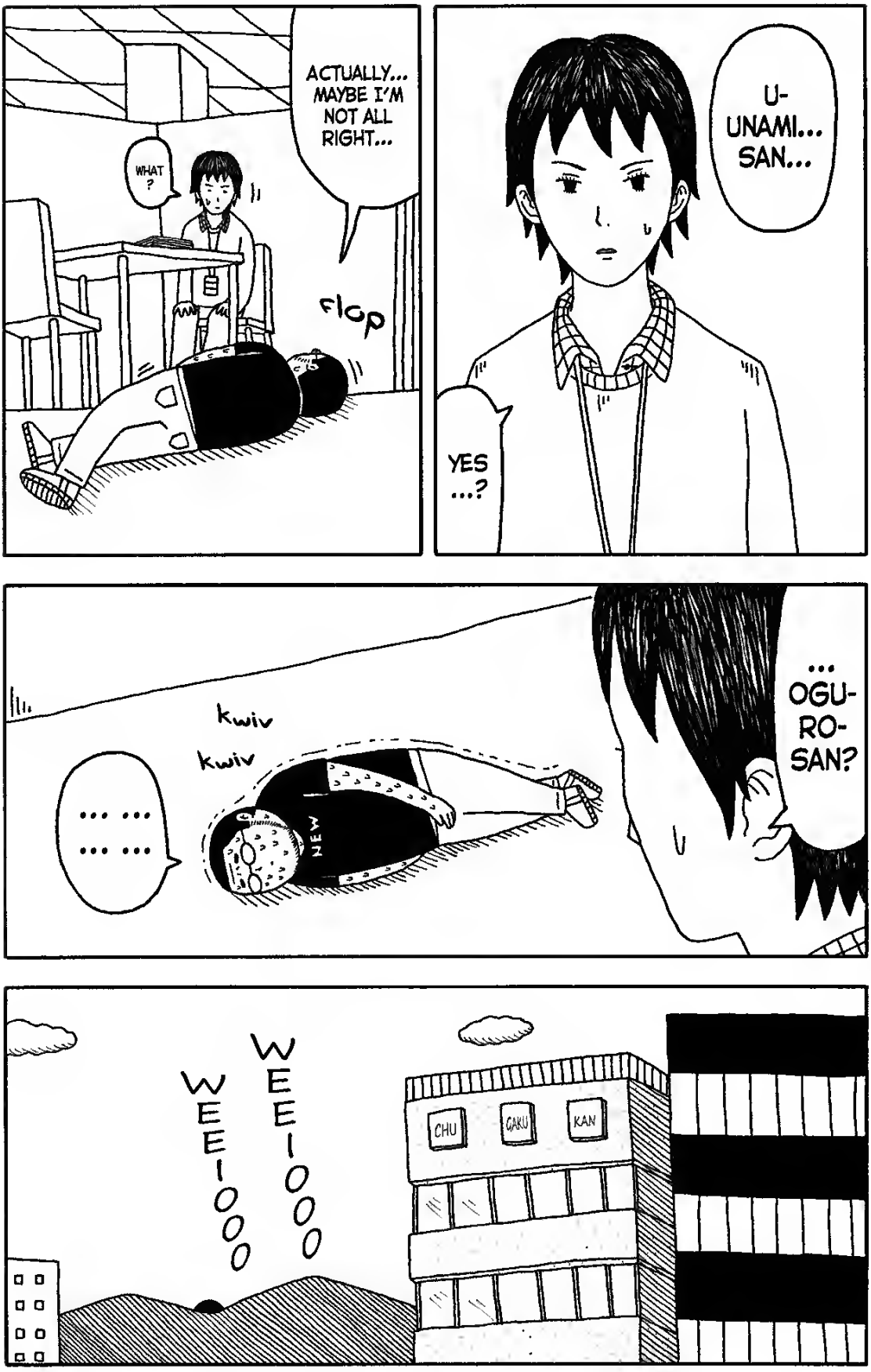
FOR YOU TO GET PUBLISHED... IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE.

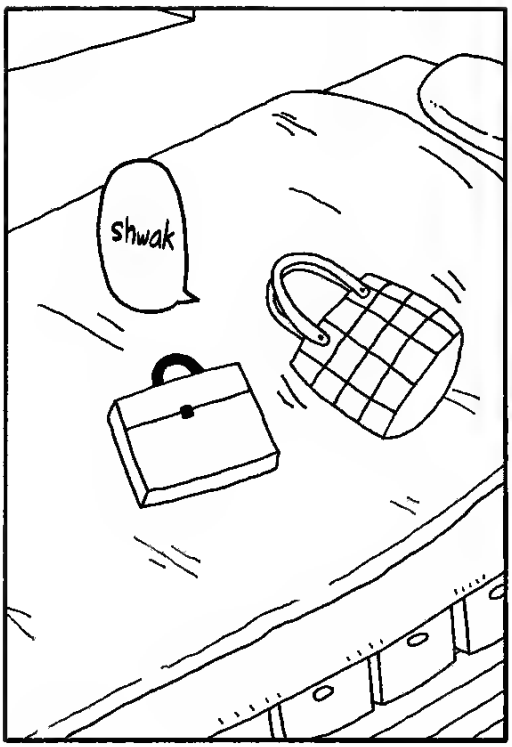

...IS IT HOT IN HERE?
You're sweating...
NO ...
NEW

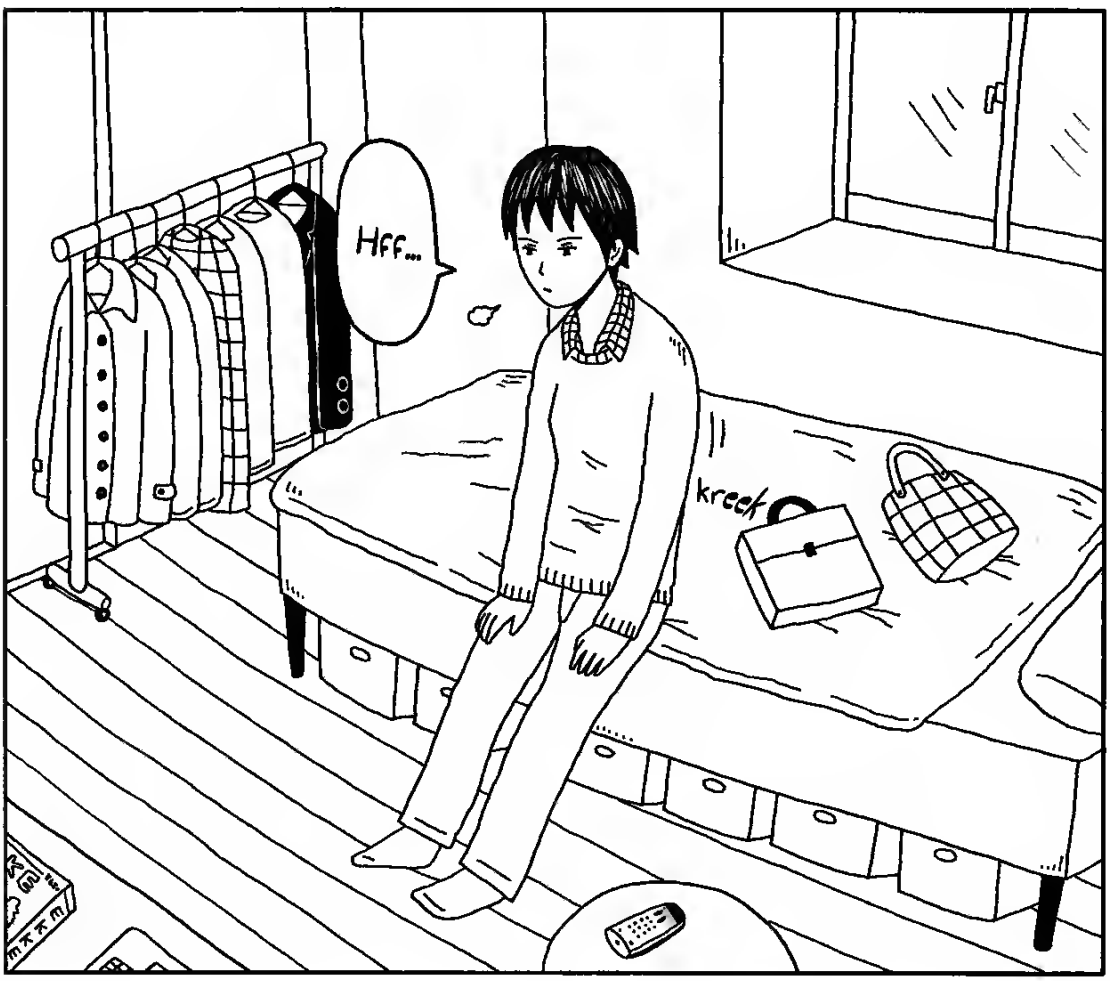

My neck… is killing me…
NEW


IT'S JUST …
kwiv
kwiv
MY NECK …
EW

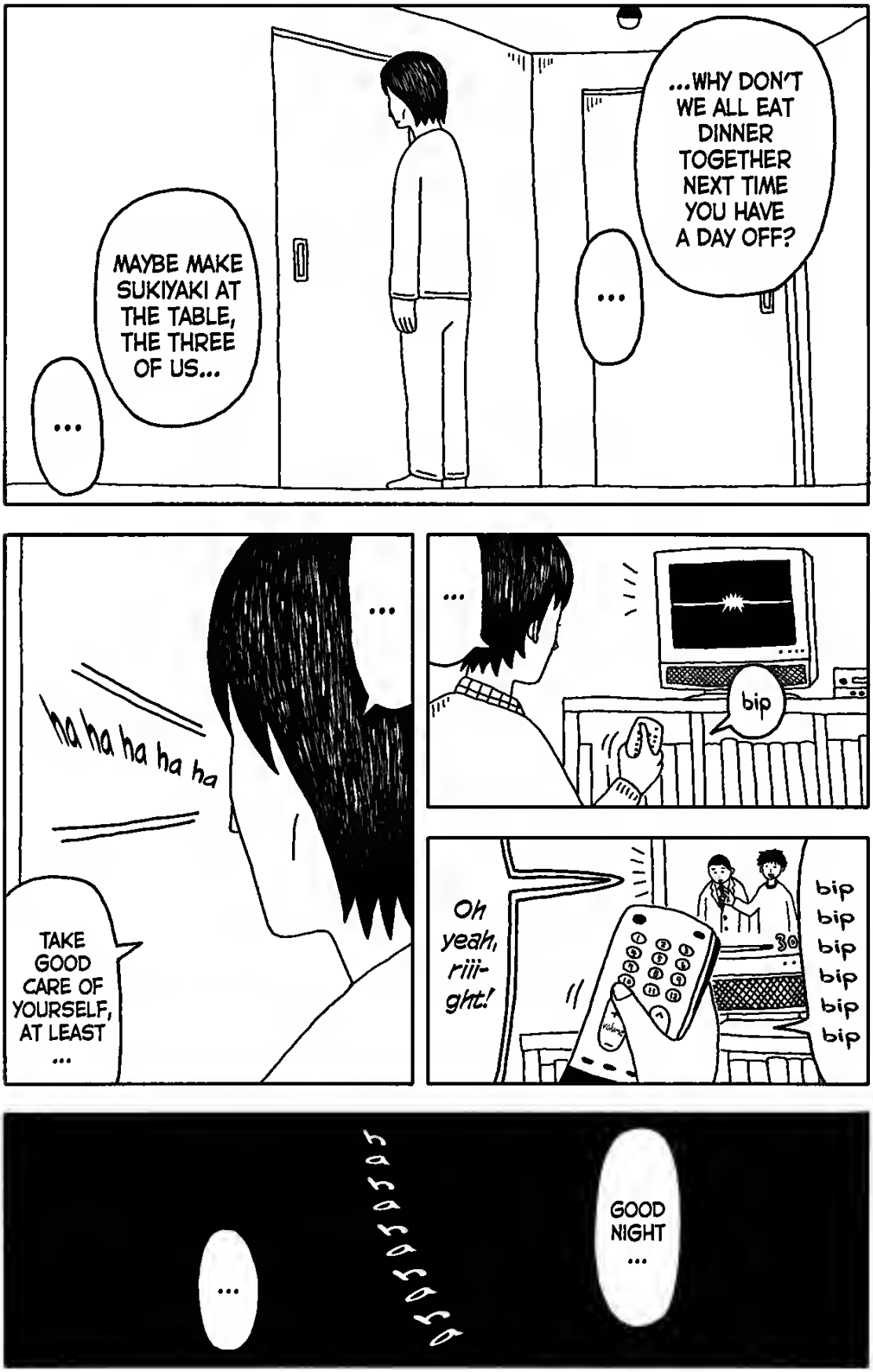
kwiv
kwiv
…ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I-I'M … FINE …

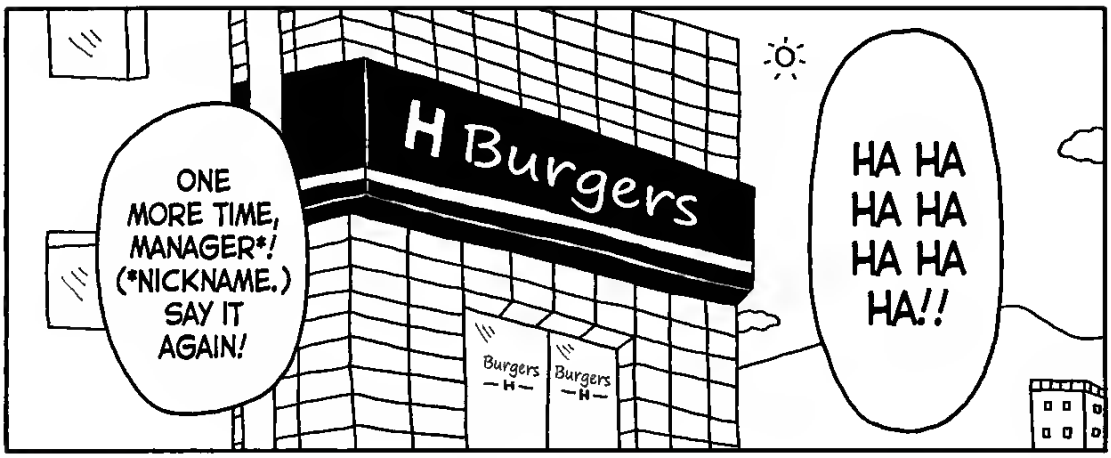

WHAT ?
ACTUALLY... MAYBE I'M NOT ALL RIGHT...
flop
U- UNAMI... SAN...
YES ...?
kwiv
kwiv
... ...
... ...
NEW
... OGU- RO- SAN?
WEEIOOO
WEEIOOO
CHU
GAKU
KAN

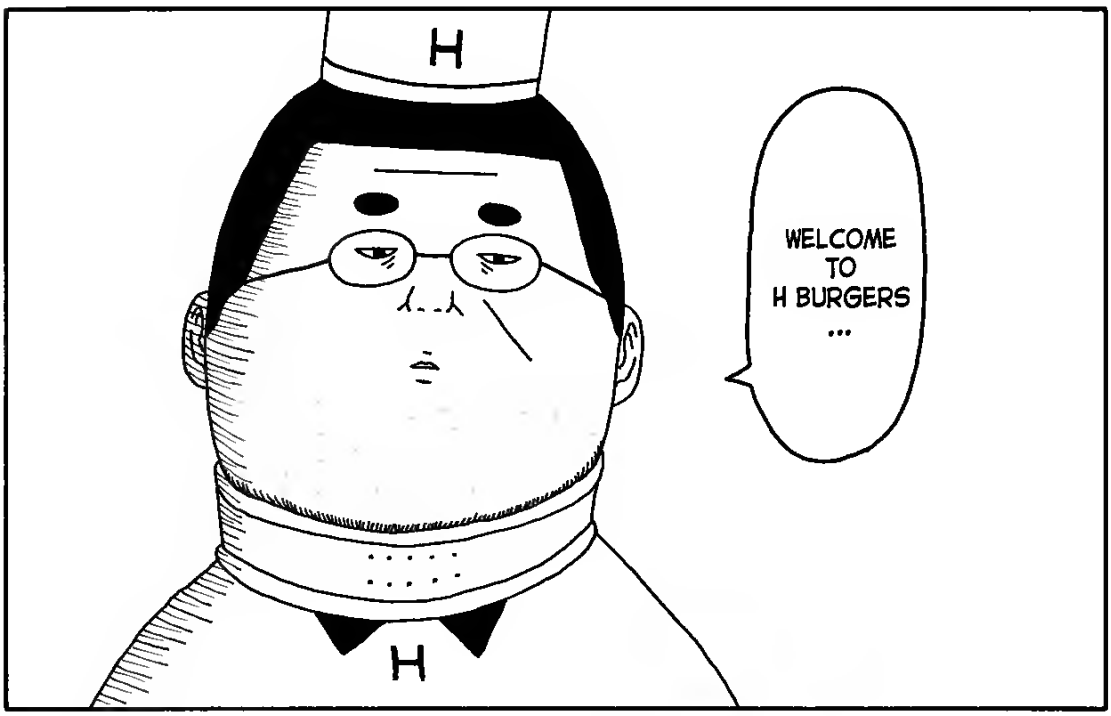

shwak

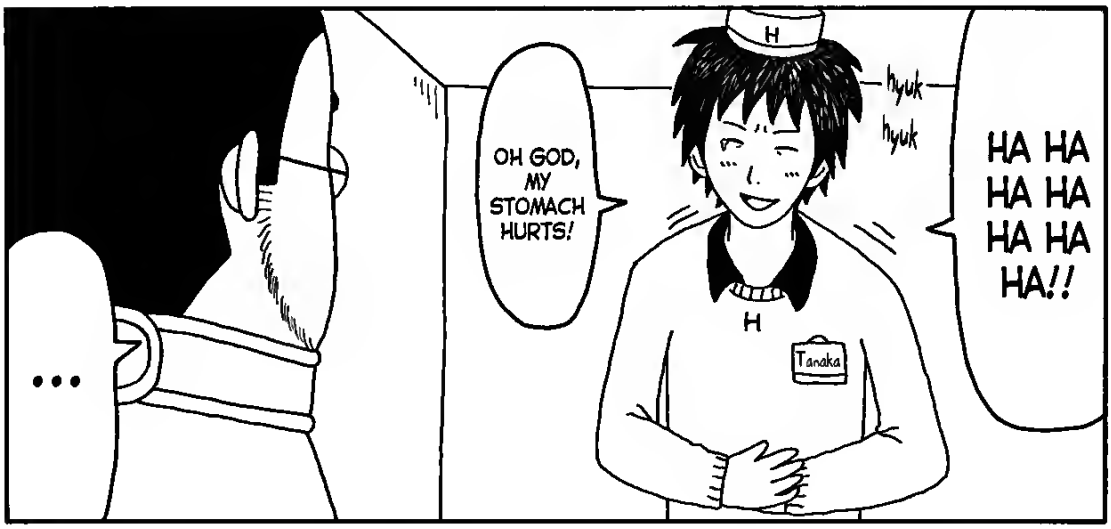

Hff...
kreek

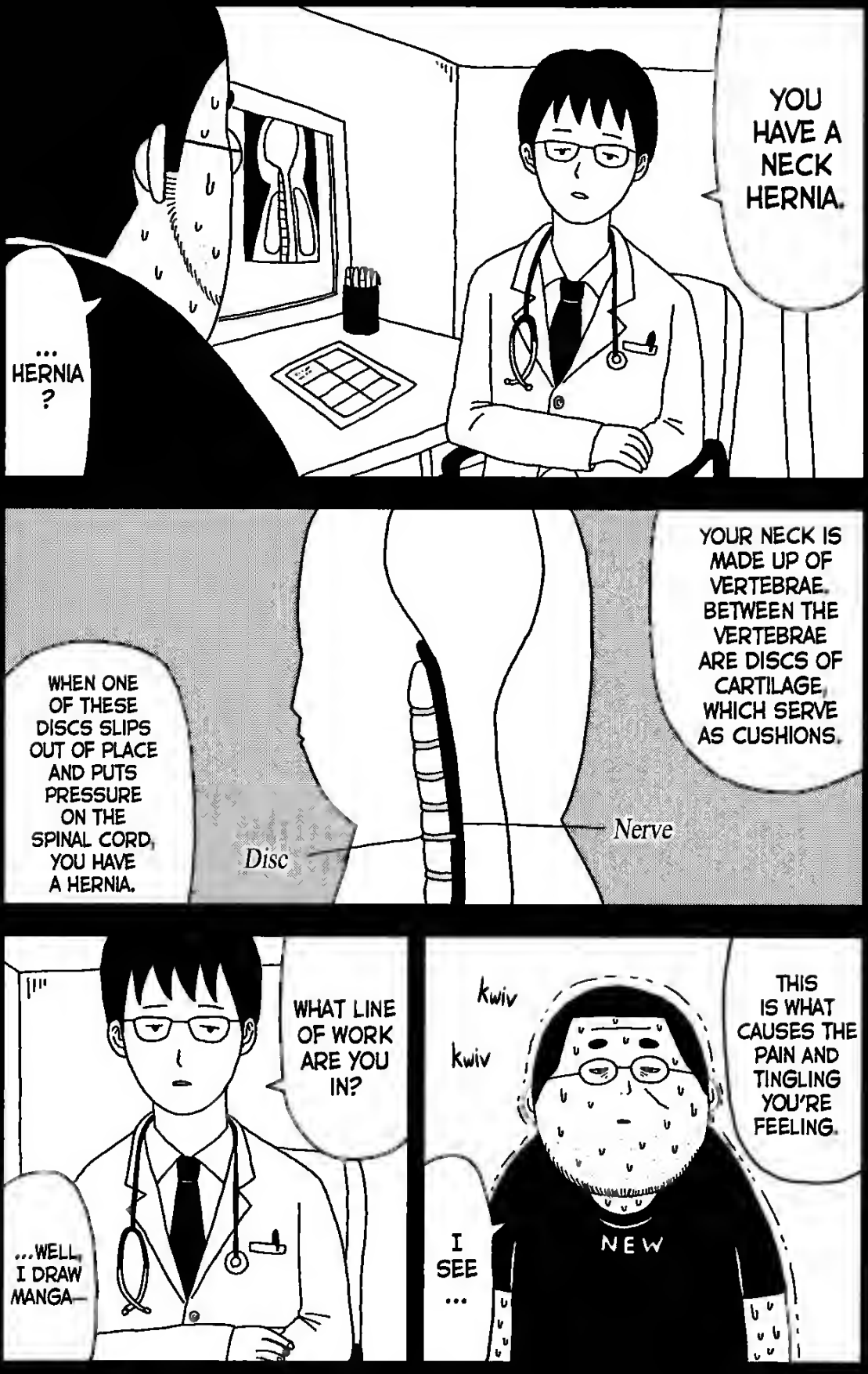
nok
nok
nok
AYA... WELCOME HOME...
...
... HOW'S WORK THESE DAYS?
...IT'S TOUGH BEING AN EDITOR, ISN'T IT?
...


...WHY DON'T WE ALL EAT DINNER TOGETHER NEXT TIME YOU HAVE A DAY OFF?
...
MAYBE MAKE SUKIYAKI AT THE TABLE, THE THREE OF US...
...
...
bip
...
ha ha ha ha ha
TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF, AT LEAST ...
Oh yeah, riii-ght!
bip
bip
bip
bip
bip
bip
...
hahahaha
GOOD NIGHT ...


H Burgers
Burgers H
Burgers H
ONE MORE TIME, MANAGER*! (*NICKNAME.) SAY IT AGAIN!
HA HA HA HA HA HA!!

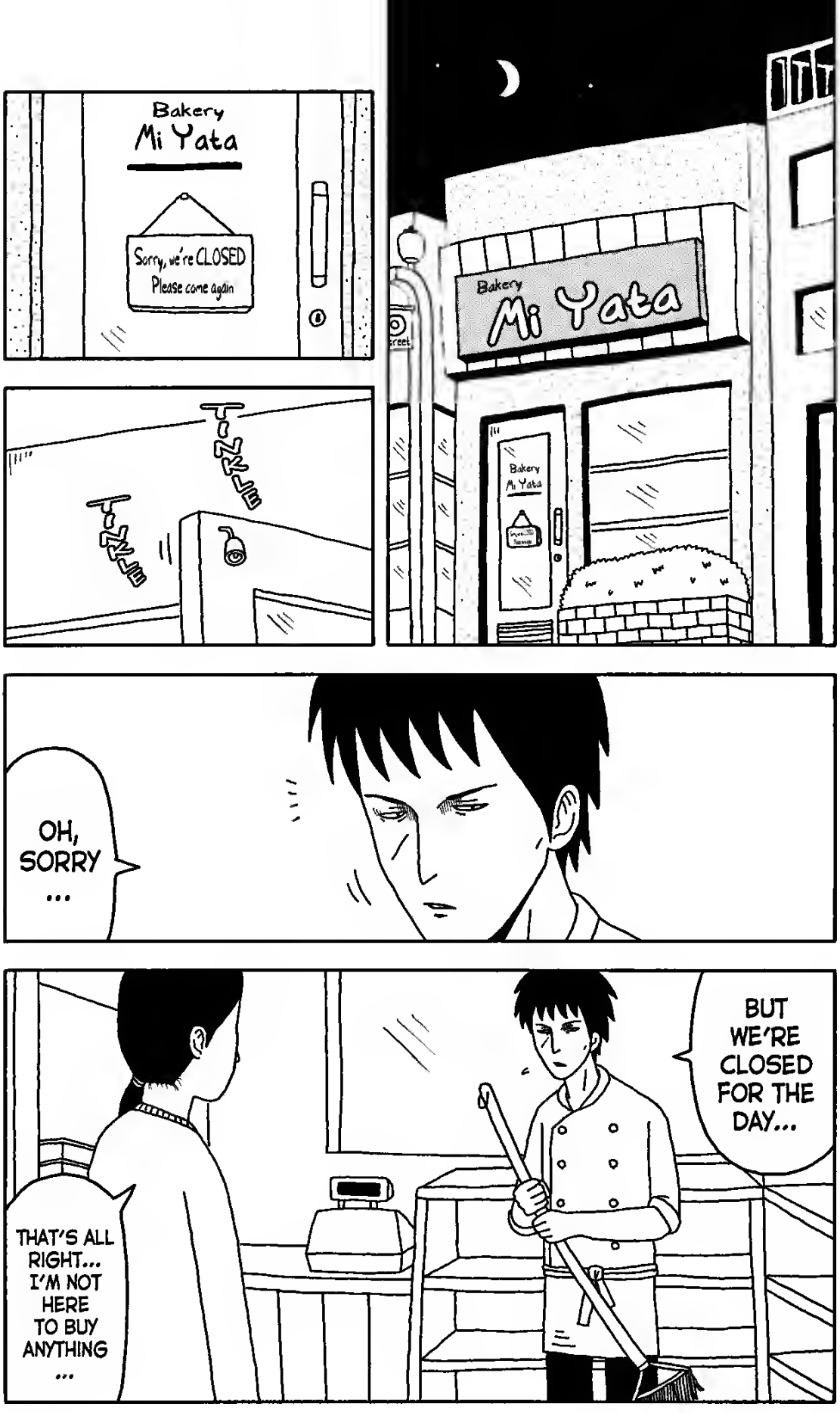

H
H
WELCOME TO H BURGERS ...


...
OH GOD, MY STOMACH HURTS!
H
Tanaka
hyuk hyuk
HA HA HA HA HA HA!!


YOU HAVE A NECK HERNIA.
... HERNIA ?
YOUR NECK IS MADE UP OF VERTEBRAE. BETWEEN THE VERTEBRAE ARE DISCS OF CARTILAGE, WHICH SERVE AS CUSHIONS.
WHEN ONE OF THESE DISCS SLIPS OUT OF PLACE AND PUTS PRESSURE ON THE SPINAL CORD, YOU HAVE A HERNIA.
Disc
Nerve
WHAT LINE OF WORK ARE YOU IN?
...WELL, I DRAW MANGA—
kwiv
kwiv
NEW
I SEE ...
THIS IS WHAT CAUSES THE PAIN AND TINGLING YOU'RE FEELING.

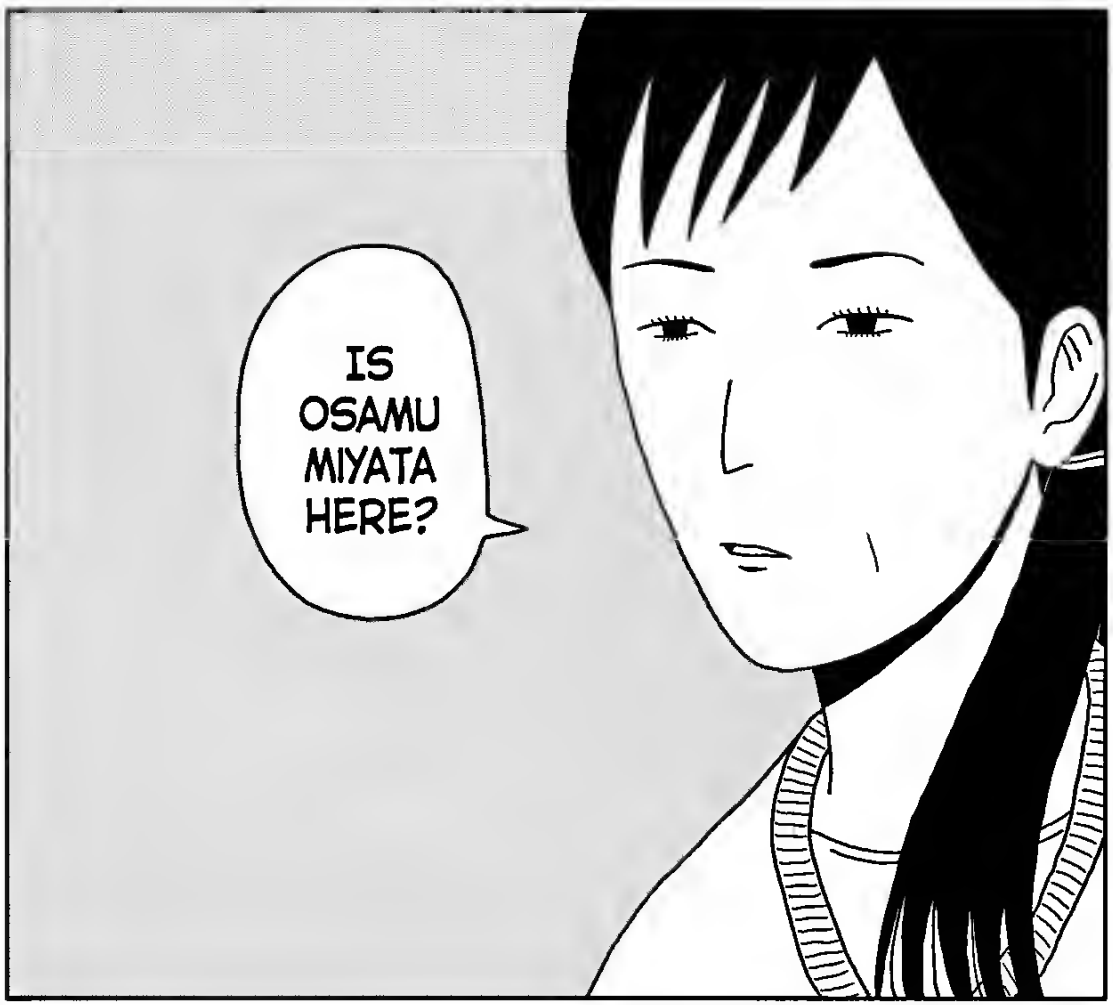
I'M A BIG FAN OF MANGA!
OH, REALLY ...
WELL ...
YOU'RE A MANGA ARTIST?
WHAT ?!
SO, DOCTOR... WHAT CAUSED THIS...?
Drawing?
WHAT CAUSED IT?
...IT'S A SECRET.
EW
WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR TITLES?
I'll go out and buy them!
kwiv
kwiv
MY AGE... ... ...
I'D SAY YOUR AGE...
It's the biggest reason.

My age...
d3oo3
hyuk hyuk
WELL, JEEZ, MANAGER* ...(*NICK-NAME.) IT'S AGAINST THE RULES!
It's like you're trying to get laughs.
YOU TAKE TIME OFF WORK, AND THEN YOU COME BACK IN WORSE SHAPE THAN BEFORE...?
pfft pfft
Tanaka
TANAKA, DUDE... QUIT LAUGHING ALREADY.
owwch
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE CONCERN ...?
Ogura
WELL, WHAT CAN I DO? IT'S NOT LIKE I COULD STAY HOME FOREVER...
Financially speaking...
HEY, LOOK, THERE'S A CUSTOMER LEAVING!
THANK YOU, PLEASE COME AGAIN...
owwch
HA HA HA HA HA!
...


Bakery
Mi Yata
Sorry, we're CLOSED
Please come again
Bakery
Mi Yata
Bakery
Mi Yata
OH, SORRY ...
BUT WE'RE CLOSED FOR THE DAY...
THAT'S ALL RIGHT... I'M NOT HERE TO BUY ANYTHING ...

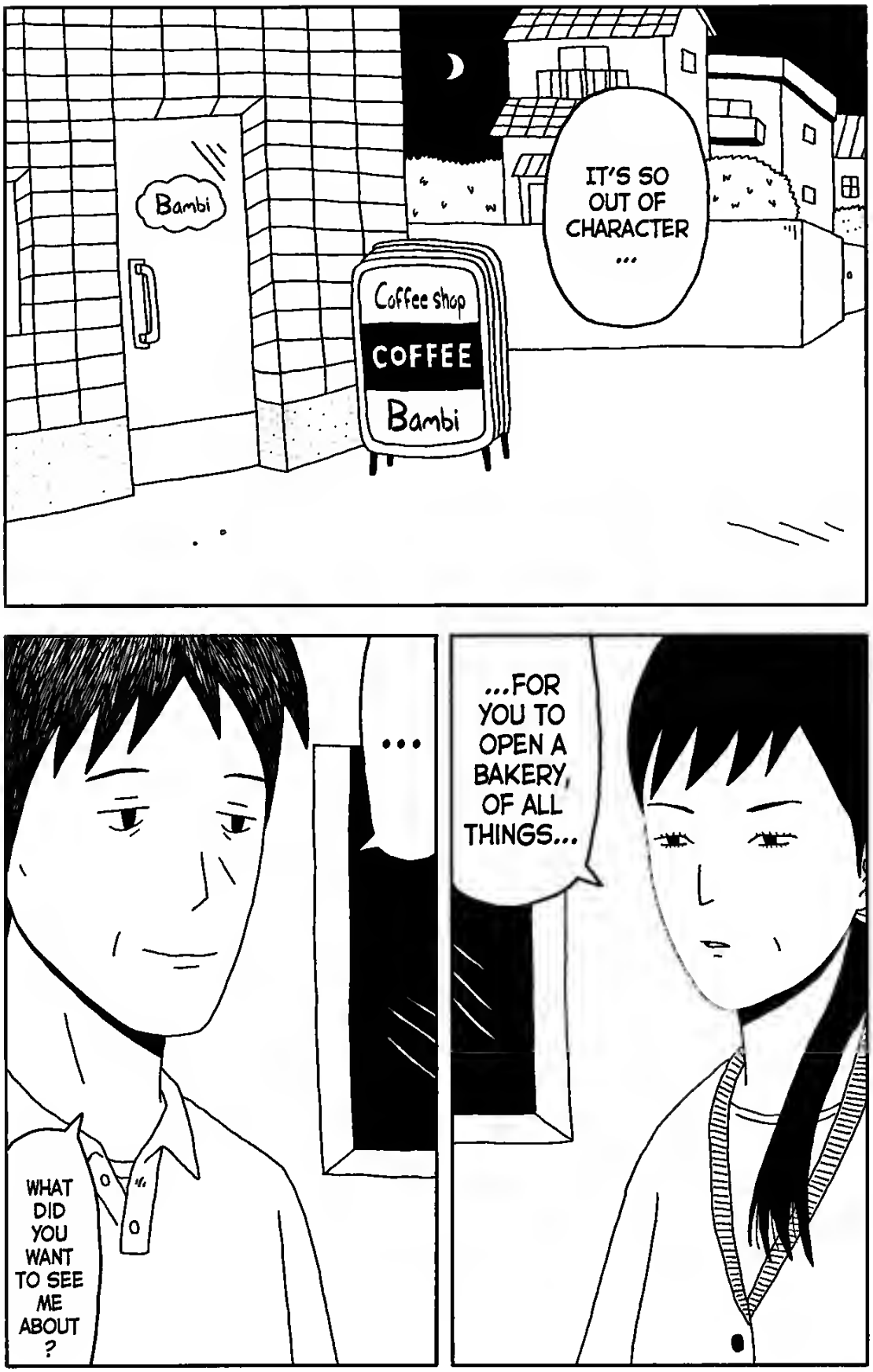
I Might Be a Loser, But I'm a Loser in My Own Unique, Precious Way

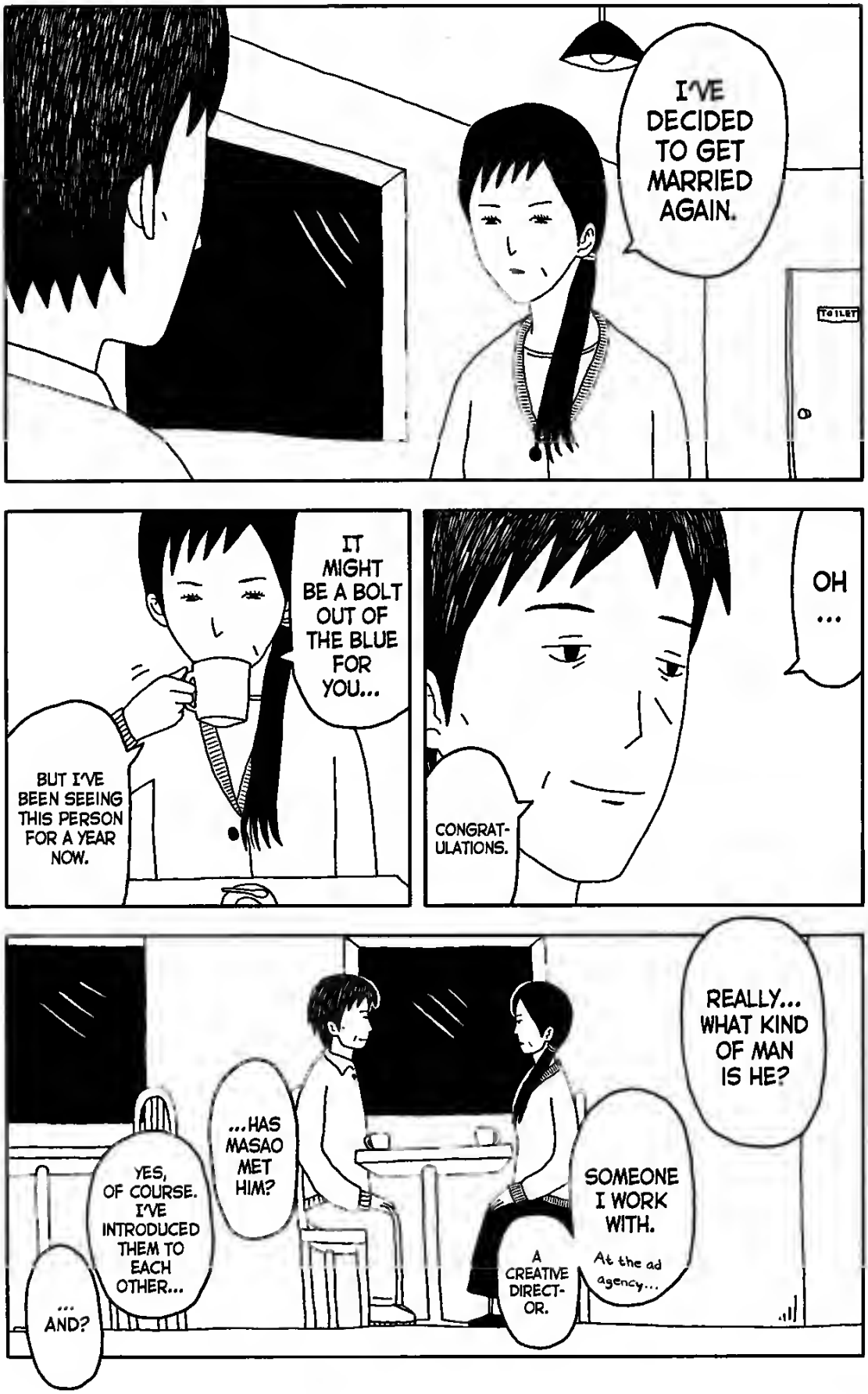
By Person Nakamura (42)

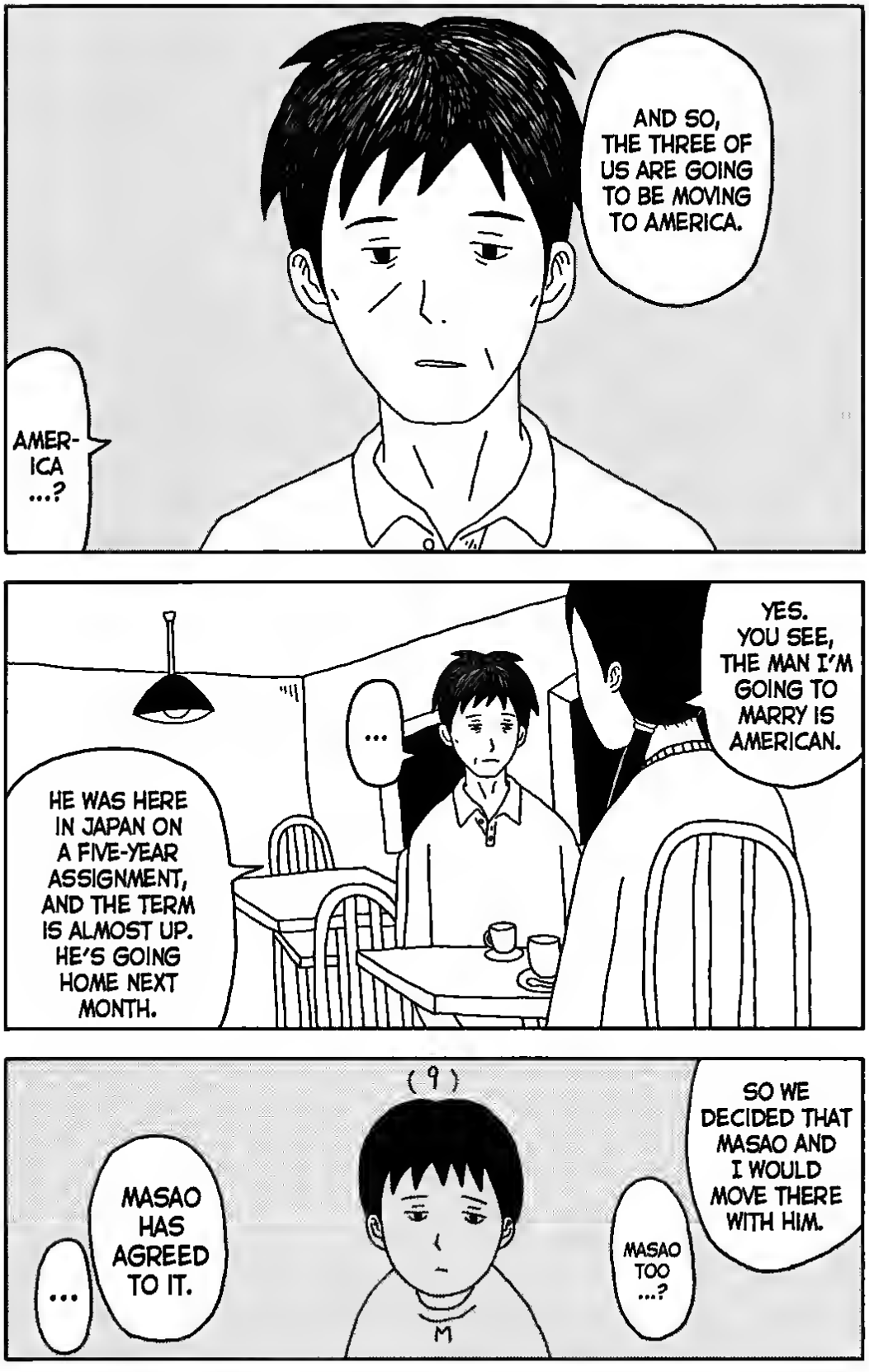


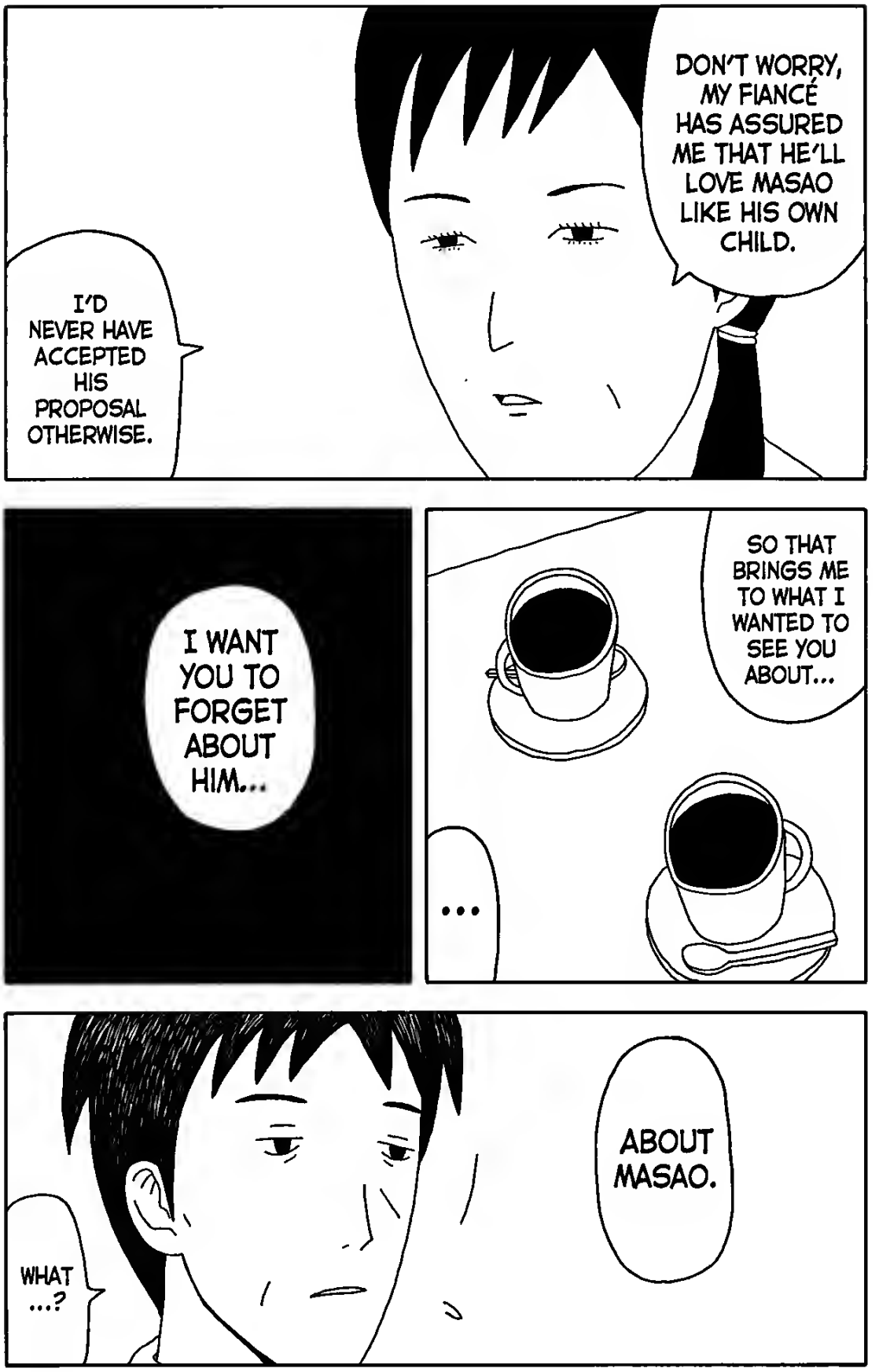
Dropped *in secondary selection stage of the 36th Ekke-man contest.*

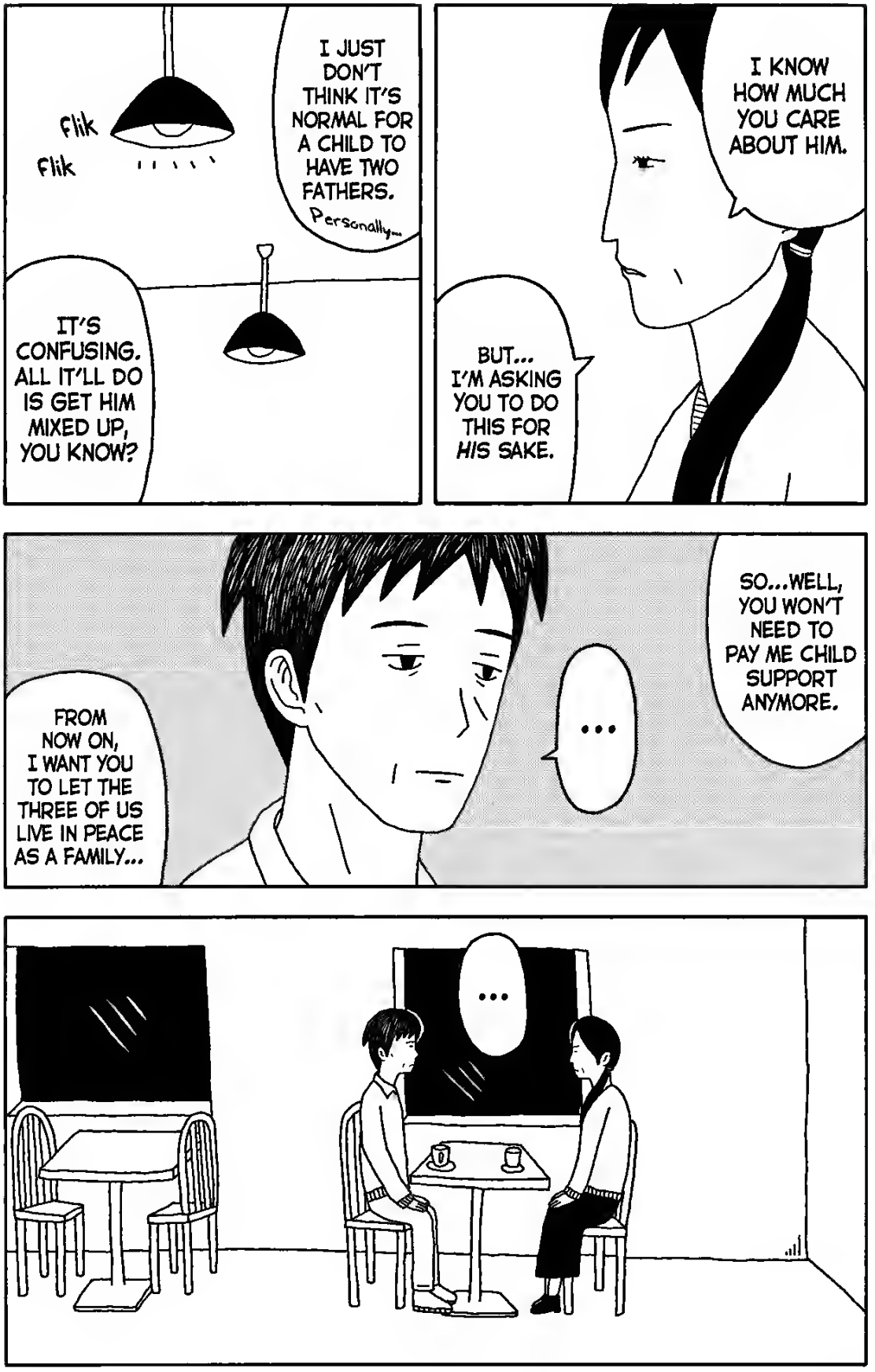
Chapter 22:
Midlife Crisis

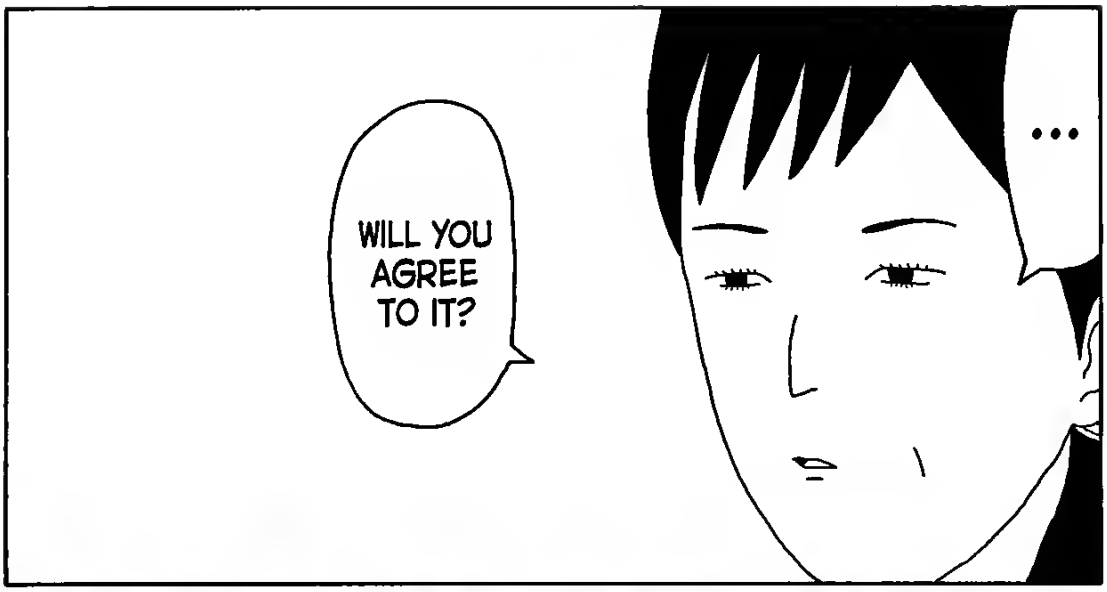

Bambi
IT'S SO OUT OF CHARACTER ...
Coffee shop
COFFEE
Bambi
...
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME ABOUT ?
...FOR YOU TO OPEN A BAKERY, OF ALL THINGS...

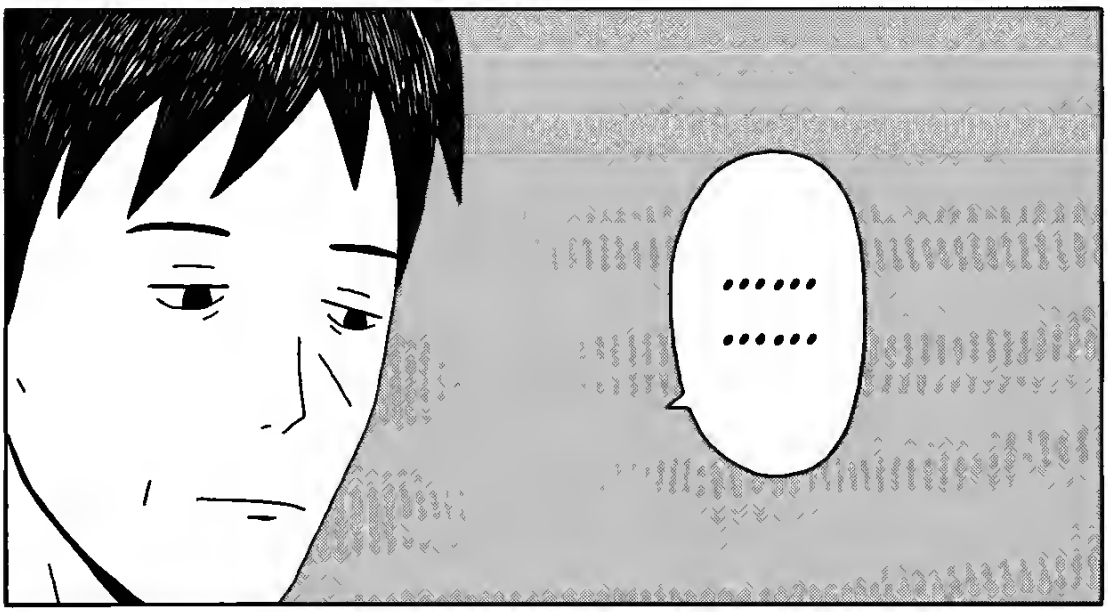

I'VE DECIDED TO GET MARRIED AGAIN.
TOILET
IT MIGHT BE A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE FOR YOU...
BUT I'VE BEEN SEEING THIS PERSON FOR A YEAR NOW.
OH ...
CONGRAT-ULATIONS.
REALLY... WHAT KIND OF MAN IS HE?
SOMEONE I WORK WITH.
At the ad agency...
A CREATIVE DIRECT-OR.
...HAS MASAO MET HIM?
YES, OF COURSE. I'VE INTRODUCED THEM TO EACH OTHER...
... AND?


AND SO, THE THREE OF US ARE GOING TO BE MOVING TO AMERICA.
AMER-ICA ...?
YES. YOU SEE, THE MAN I'M GOING TO MARRY IS AMERICAN.
...
HE WAS HERE IN JAPAN ON A FIVE-YEAR ASSIGNMENT, AND THE TERM IS ALMOST UP. HE'S GOING HOME NEXT MONTH.
(9)
SO WE DECIDED THAT MASAO AND I WOULD MOVE THERE WITH HIM.
MASAO TOO ...?
MASAO HAS AGREED TO IT.
...


DON'T WORRY, MY FIANCÉ HAS ASSURED ME THAT HE'LL LOVE MASAO LIKE HIS OWN CHILD.
I'D NEVER HAVE ACCEPTED HIS PROPOSAL OTHERWISE.
I WANT YOU TO FORGET ABOUT HIM...
SO THAT BRINGS ME TO WHAT I WANTED TO SEE YOU ABOUT...
...
ABOUT MASAO.
WHAT ...?

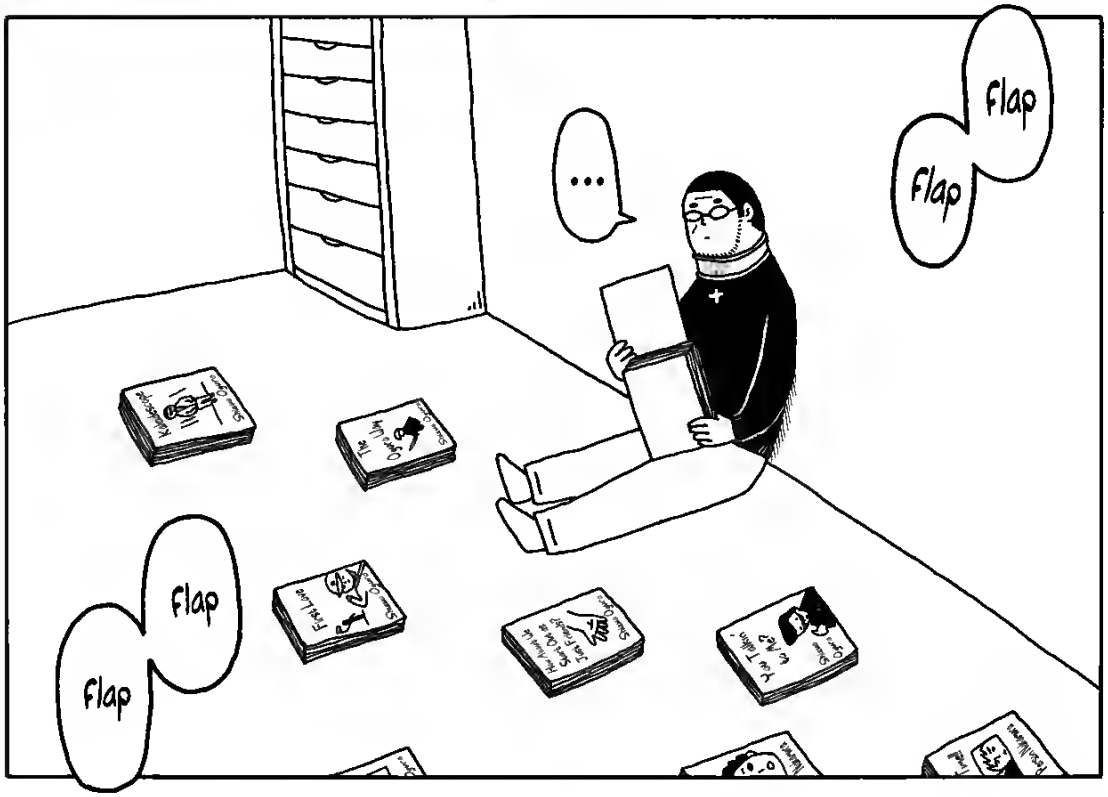

Flik
Flik
I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S NORMAL FOR A CHILD TO HAVE TWO FATHERS.
Personally...
IT'S CONFUSING. ALL IT'LL DO IS GET HIM MIXED UP, YOU KNOW?
I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE ABOUT HIM.
BUT... I'M ASKING YOU TO DO THIS FOR *HIS* SAKE.
SO...WELL, YOU WON'T NEED TO PAY ME CHILD SUPPORT ANYMORE.
...
FROM NOW ON, I WANT YOU TO LET THE THREE OF US LIVE IN PEACE AS A FAMILY...
...

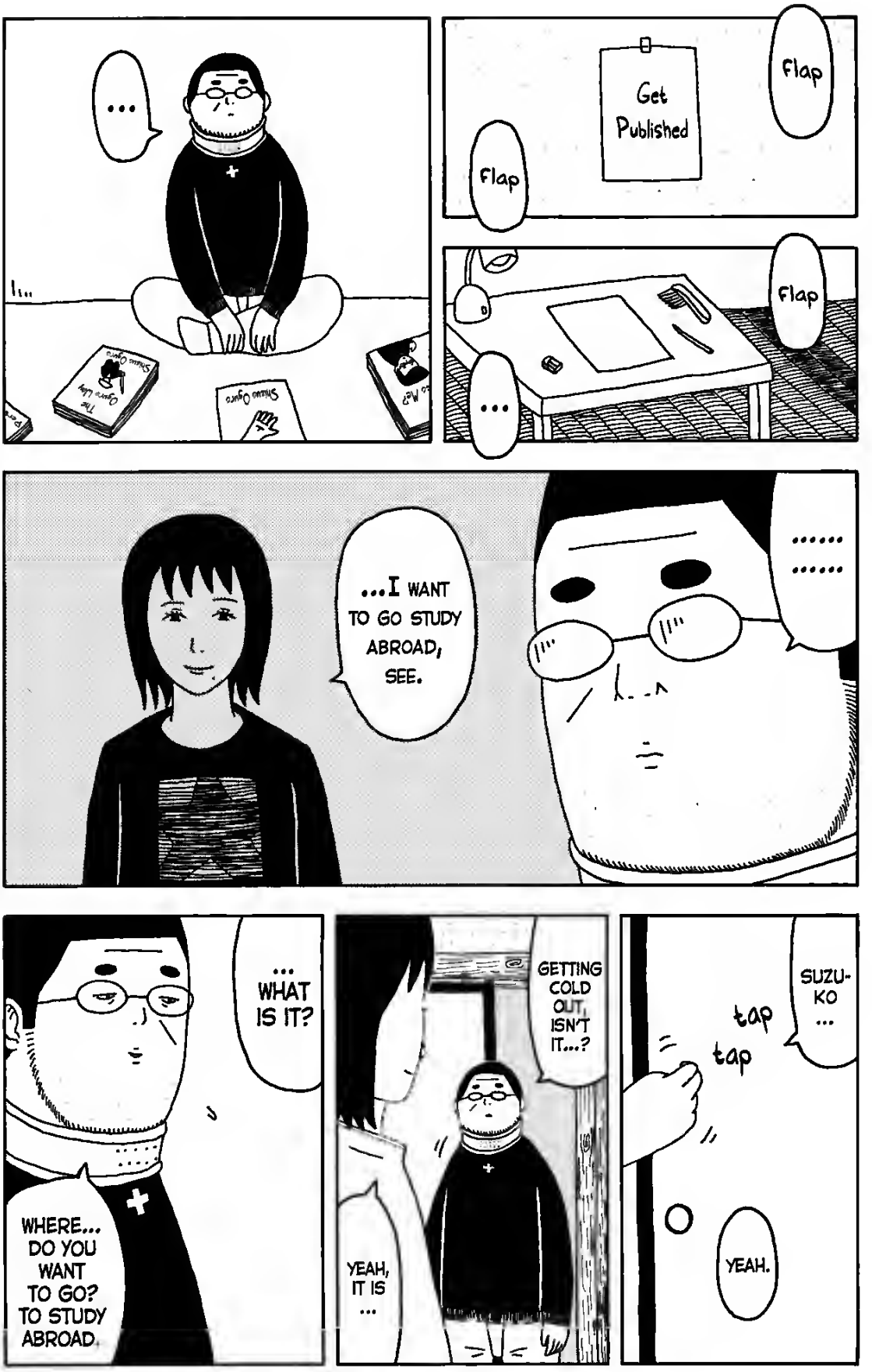

WILL YOU AGREE TO IT?
...

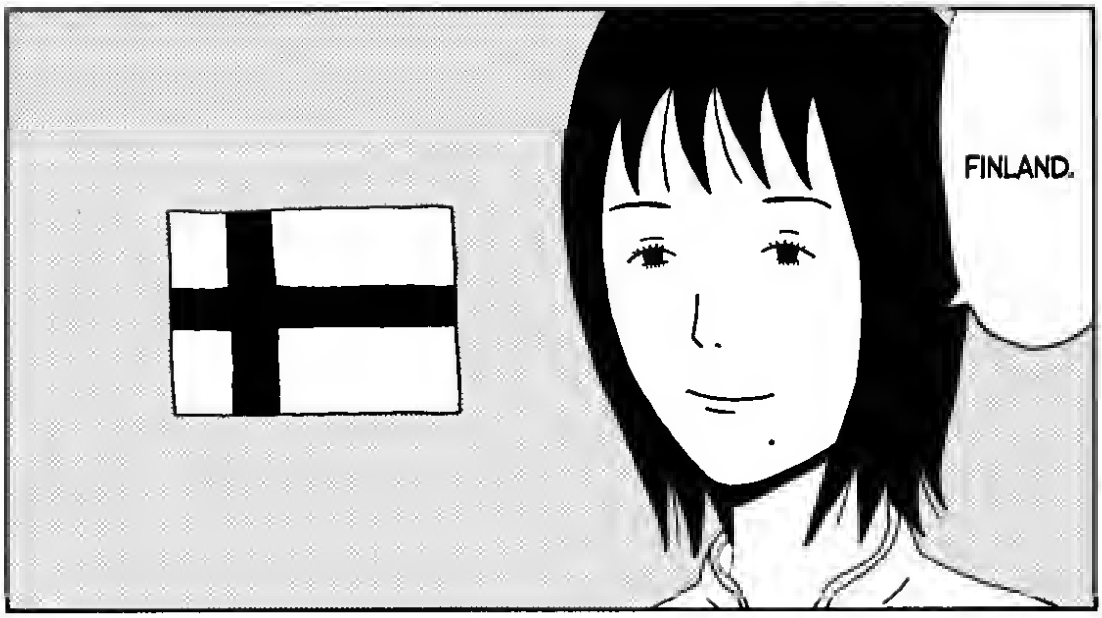

.....
.....

ALL RIGHT ...

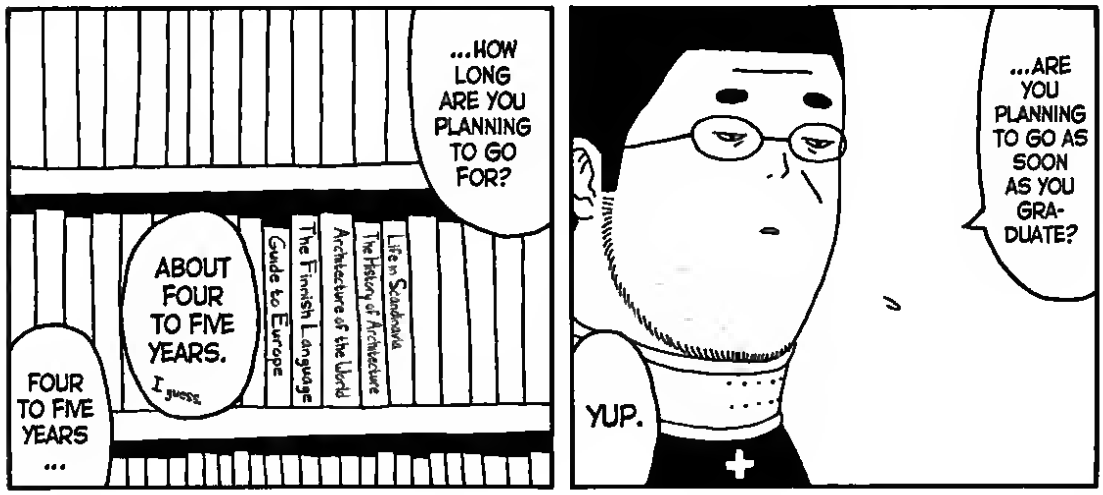
"For you to get published… is virtually impossible."

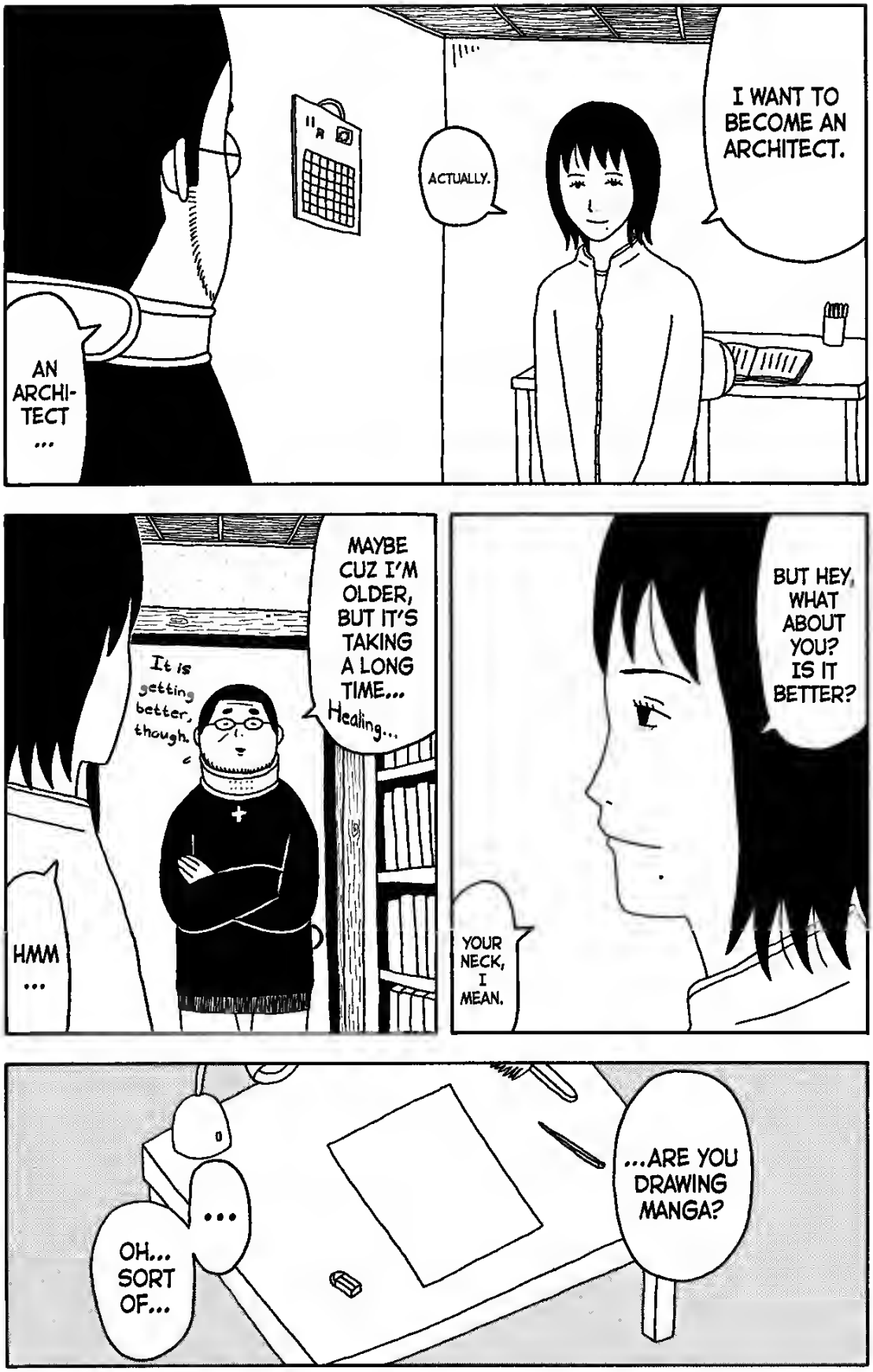


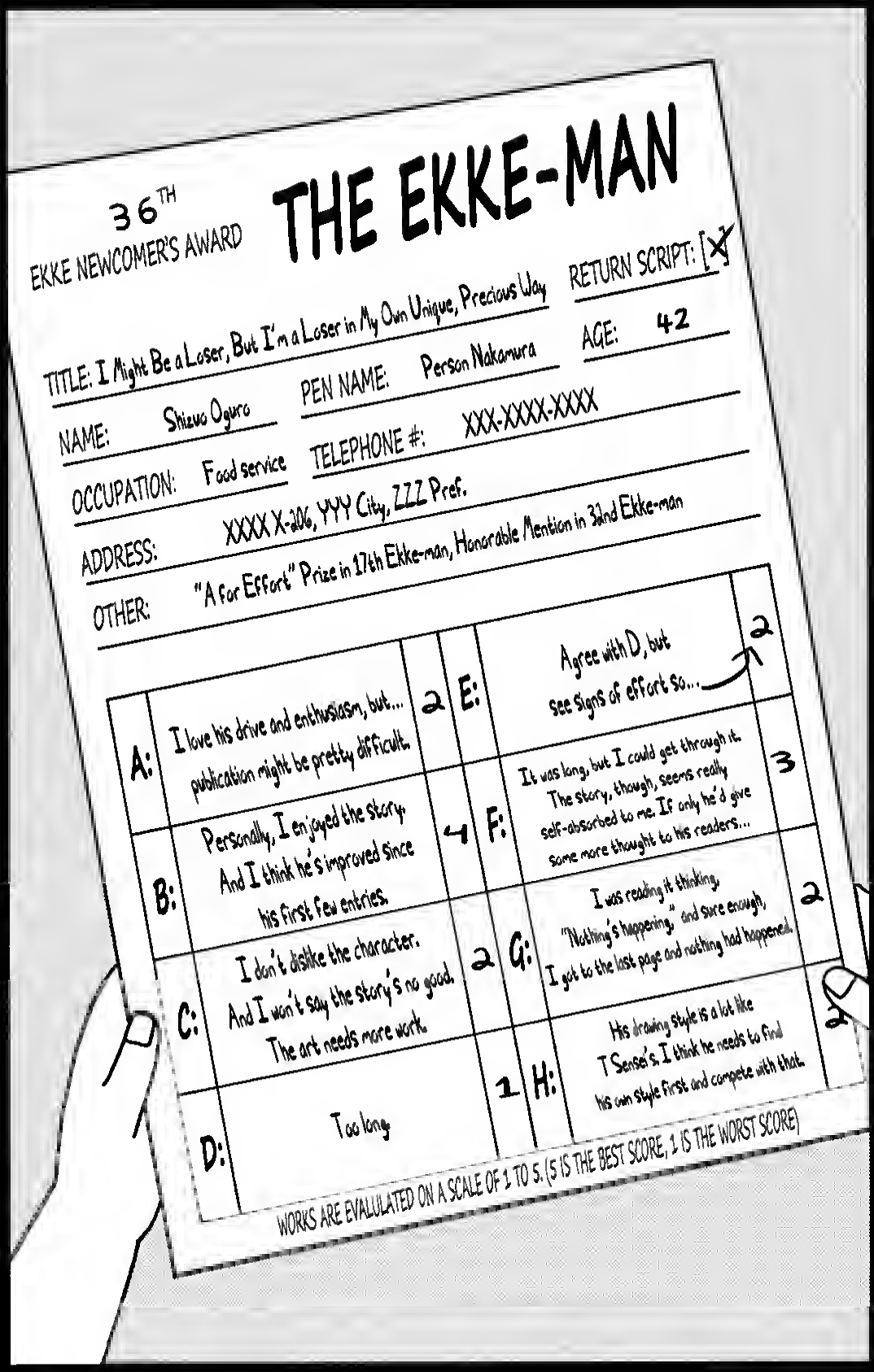

...
Get Published
Flap
Flap
Flap
...
.....
.....
...I WANT TO GO STUDY ABROAD, SEE.
...
WHAT IS IT?
WHERE... DO YOU WANT TO GO? TO STUDY ABROAD.
GETTING COLD OUT, ISN'T IT...?
YEAH, IT IS ...
SUZU-KO ...
tap
tap
YEAH.


FINLAND.

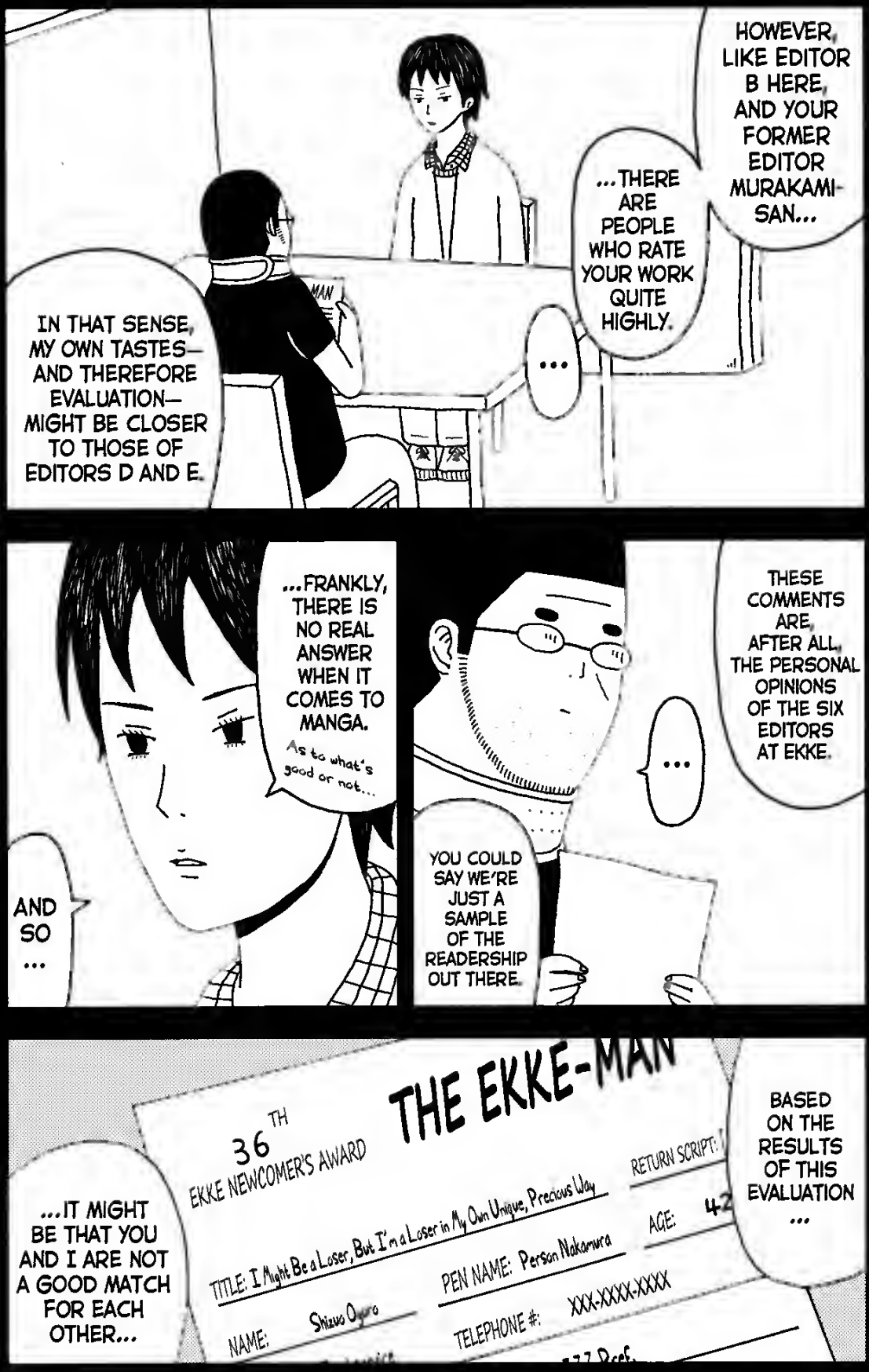
...FINLAND?
Where was that...?
IT'S IN SCANDINAVIA.
IS THAT... IN EUROPE?
YEAH. IT'S IN EUROPE.


...ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO AS SOON AS YOU GRADUATE?
YUP.
...HOW LONG ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO FOR?
ABOUT FOUR TO FIVE YEARS. I guess.
FOUR TO FIVE YEARS...
Life in Scandinavia
The History of Architecture
Architecture of the World
The Finnish Language
Guide to Europe

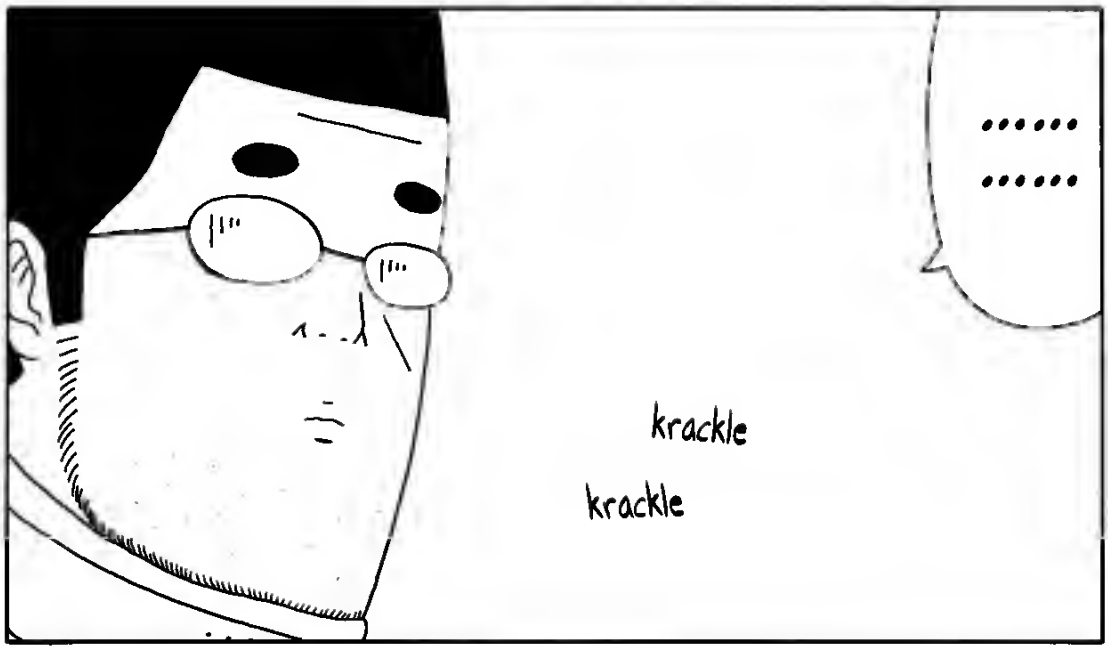

I WANT TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT.
ACTUALLY.
AN ARCHI-TECT ...
MAYBE CUZ I'M OLDER, BUT IT'S TAKING A LONG TIME...
Healing...
It is getting better, though.
HMM ...
BUT HEY, WHAT ABOUT YOU? IS IT BETTER?
YOUR NECK, I MEAN.
...ARE YOU DRAWING MANGA?
...
OH... SORT OF...

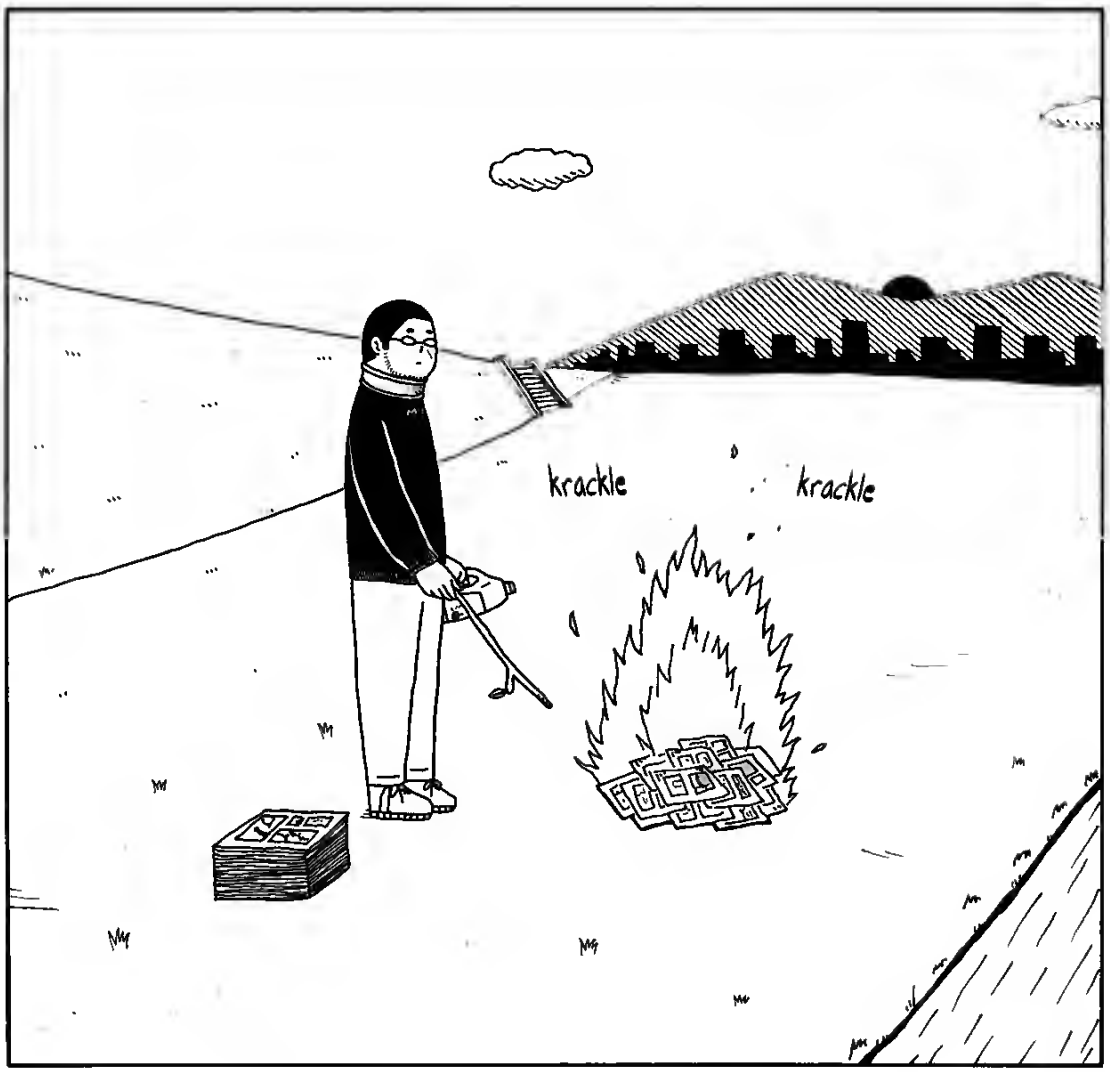

36TH
EKKE NEWCOMER'S AWARD
THE EKKE-MAN
TITLE: I Might Be a Loser, But I'm a Loser in My Own Unique, Precious Way
RETURN SCRIPT: [X]
NAME: Shizuo Oguro
PEN NAME: Person Nakamura
AGE: 42
OCCUPATION: Food service
TELEPHONE #: XXX-XXXX-XXXX
ADDRESS: XXXX X-206, YYY City, ZZZ Pref.
OTHER: "A for Effort" Prize in 17th Ekke-man, Honorable Mention in 32nd Ekke-man
A: I love his drive and enthusiasm, but... publication might be pretty difficult. 2
B: Personally, I enjoyed the story. And I think he's improved since his first few entries. 4
C: I don't dislike the character. And I won't say the story's no good. The art needs more work. 2
D: Too long 1
E: Agree with D, but see signs of effort so... 2
F: It was long, but I could get through it. The story, though, seems really self-absorbed to me. If only he'd give some more thought to his readers... 3
G: I was reading it thinking, "Nothing's happening," and sure enough, I got to the last page and nothing had happened. 2
H: His drawing style is a lot like T Sensei's. I think he needs to find his own style first and compete with that. 2
WORKS ARE EVALUATED ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5. (5 IS THE BEST SCORE, 1 IS THE WORST SCORE)

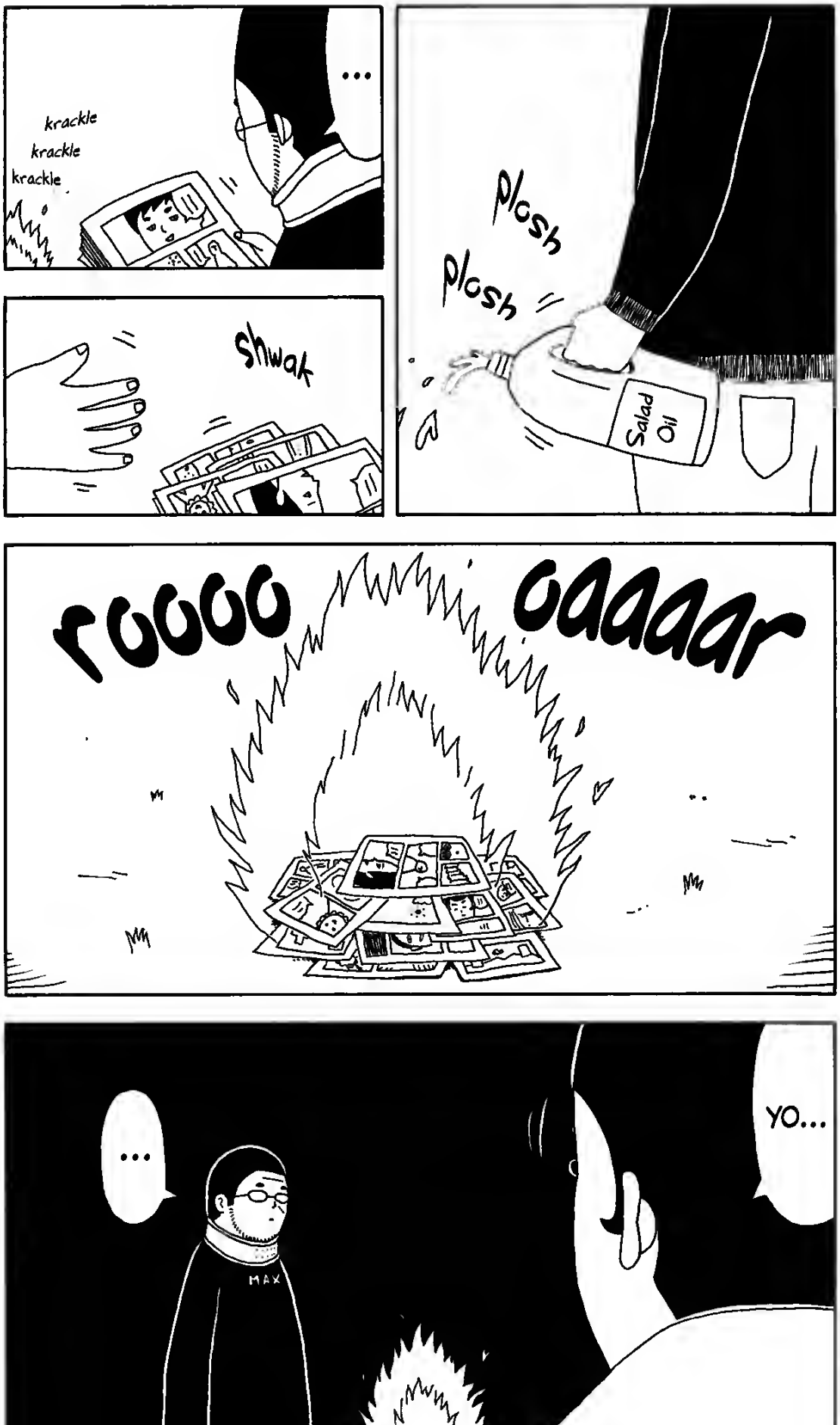
THE TOTAL COMES TO 18 POINTS.
Out of 40.
YOU DIDN'T MAKE THE FINAL CUT.
...I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS RESULT.
...
BUT... THIS IS THE REALITY.
F IS ME, BY THE WAY.
...
1
THIS... I HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. A SCORE OF 1 AT THIS STAGE...
...
5. (5 IS THE BEST SCORE, 1 IS TH

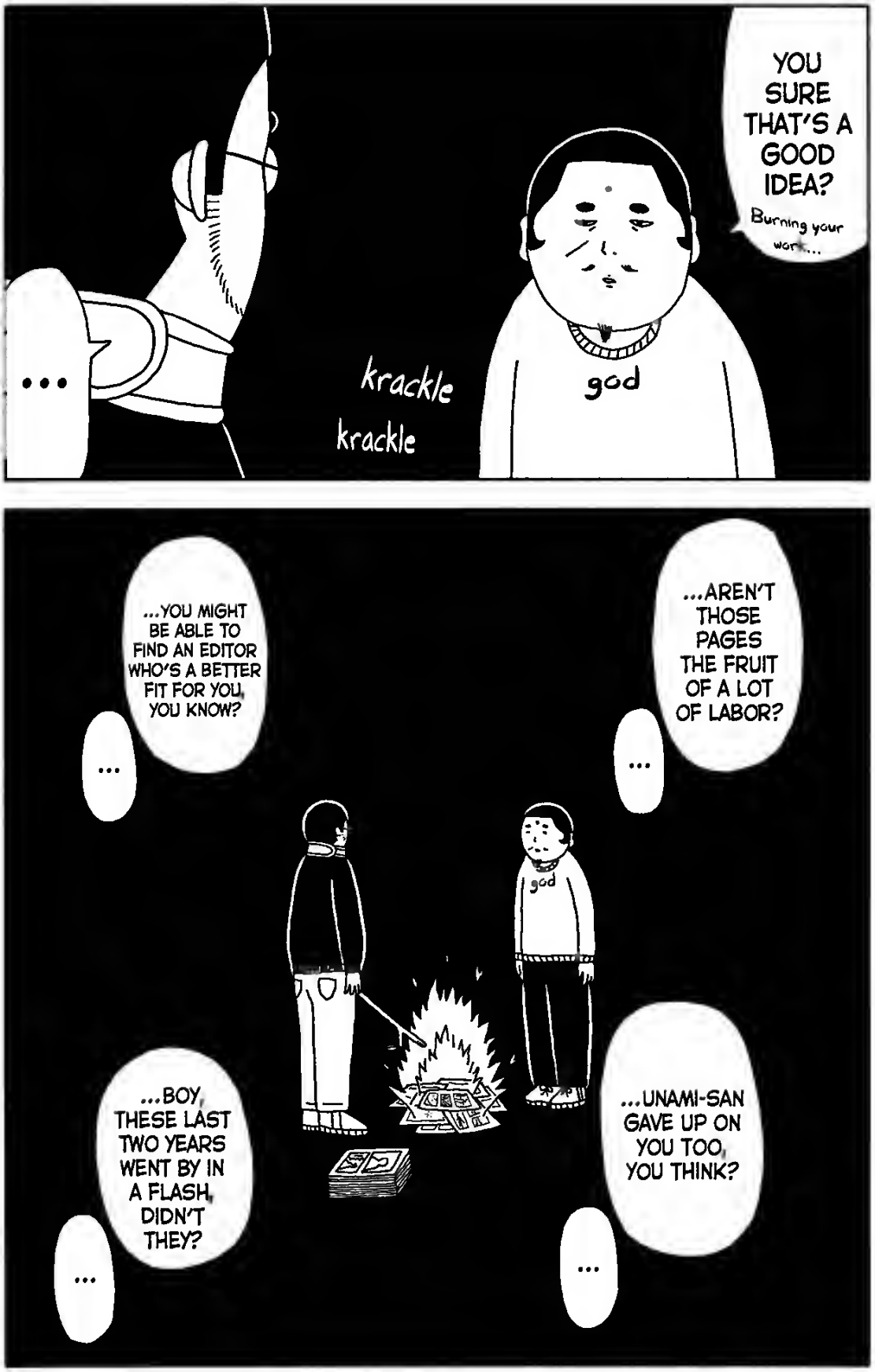

HOWEVER, LIKE EDITOR B HERE, AND YOUR FORMER EDITOR MURAKAMI-SAN...
...THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO RATE YOUR WORK QUITE HIGHLY.
...
IN THAT SENSE, MY OWN TASTES— AND THEREFORE EVALUATION— MIGHT BE CLOSER TO THOSE OF EDITORS D AND E.
THESE COMMENTS ARE, AFTER ALL, THE PERSONAL OPINIONS OF THE SIX EDITORS AT EKKE.
...
YOU COULD SAY WE'RE JUST A SAMPLE OF THE READERSHIP OUT THERE.
...FRANKLY, THERE IS NO REAL ANSWER WHEN IT COMES TO MANGA.
As to what's good or not...
AND SO ...
BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THIS EVALUATION ...
THE EKKE-MAN
36TH EKKE NEWCOMER'S AWARD
RETURN SCRIPT:
TITLE: I Might Be a Loser, But I'm a Loser in My Own Unique, Precious Way
AGE: 42
PEN NAME: Person Nakamura
NAME: Shizuo Ogura
TELEPHONE #: XXX-XXXX-XXXX
...IT MIGHT BE THAT YOU AND I ARE NOT A GOOD MATCH FOR EACH OTHER...

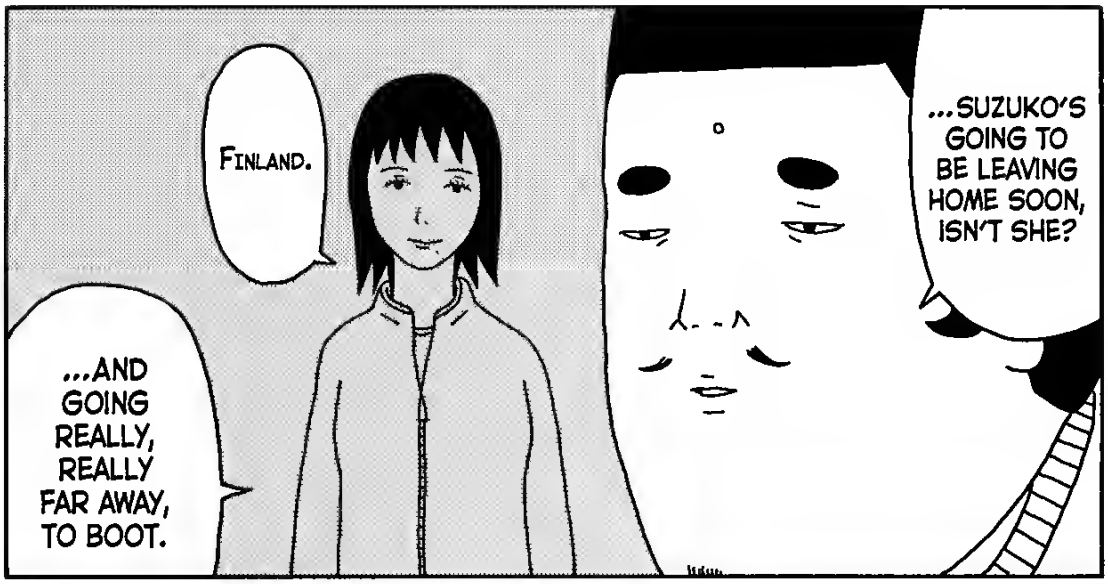
I'M GOING TO BE HONEST WITH YOU.
...
YOU NEED AN EDITOR WHO UNDERSTANDS YOUR WORK, AND CAN LEAD YOU TO PUBLICATION... AND I—
I DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT.
...

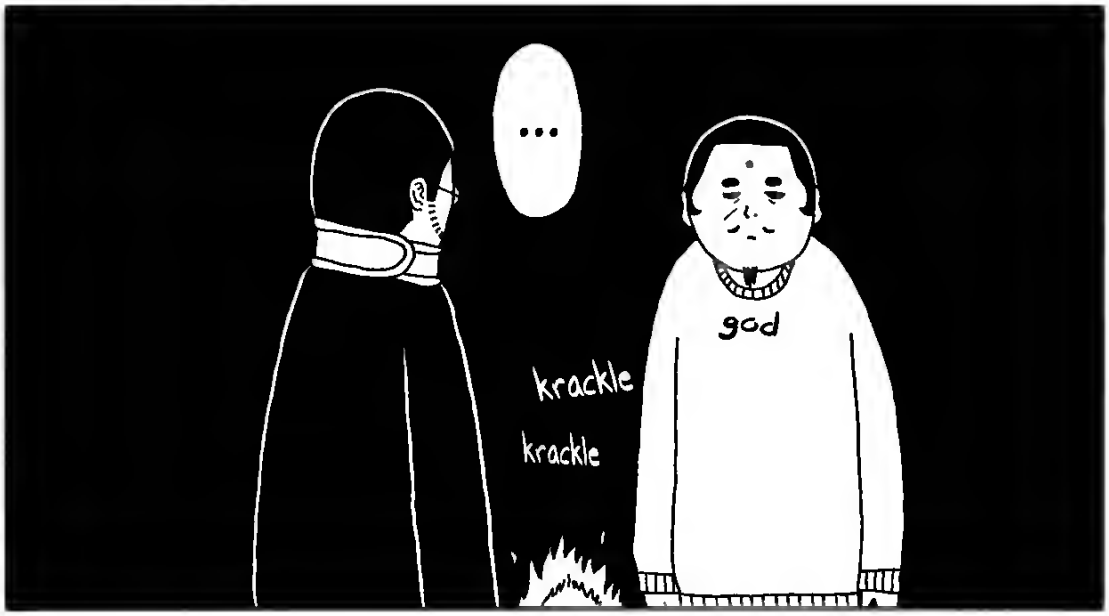

krackle
krackle


krackle
krackle


...
krackle
krackle
krackle
plosh
plosh
Salad Oil
shwak
roooo
oaaaar
...
MAX
YO...

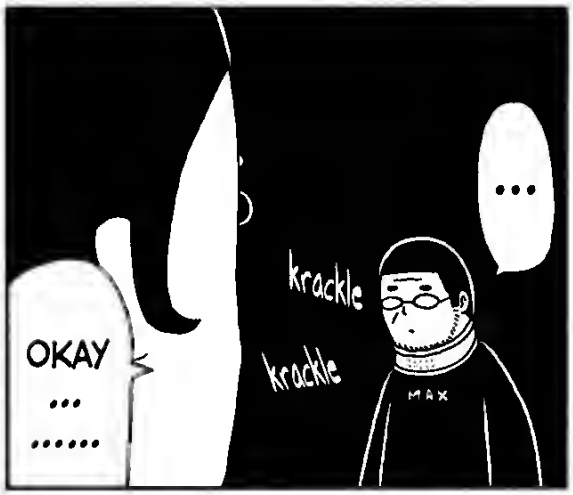

YOU SURE THAT'S A GOOD IDEA?
Burning your work...
...
krackle
krackle
god
...YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND AN EDITOR WHO'S A BETTER FIT FOR YOU, YOU KNOW?
...
...AREN'T THOSE PAGES THE FRUIT OF A LOT OF LABOR?
...
god
...BOY, THESE LAST TWO YEARS WENT BY IN A FLASH, DIDN'T THEY?
...
...UNAMI-SAN GAVE UP ON YOU TOO, YOU THINK?
...


...SUZUKO'S GOING TO BE LEAVING HOME SOON, ISN'T SHE?
FINLAND.
...AND GOING REALLY, REALLY FAR AWAY, TO BOOT.


...
krackle
krackle
god

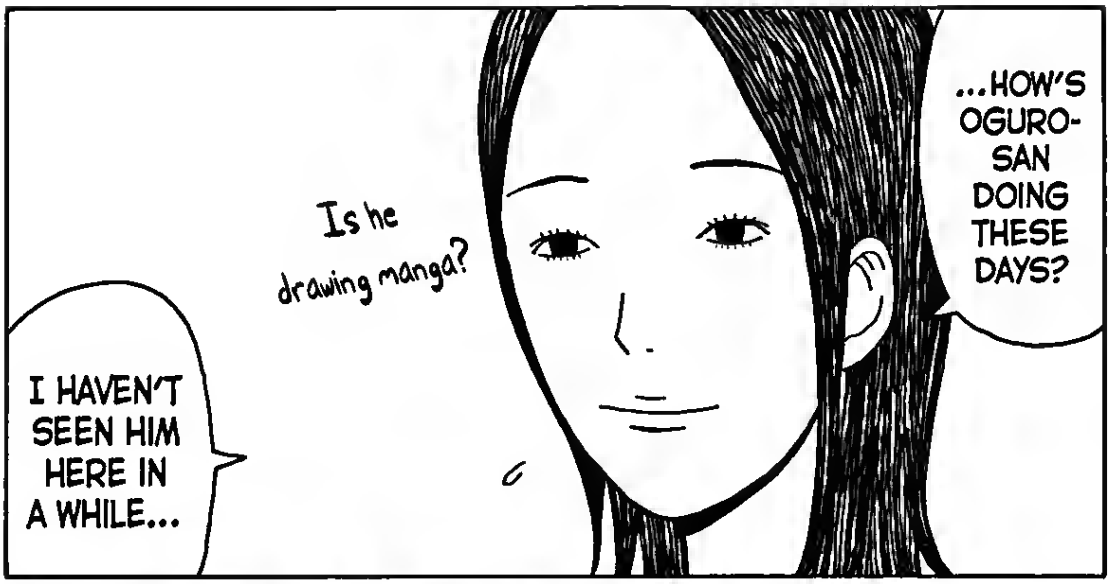
BYE, THEN ...
krackle

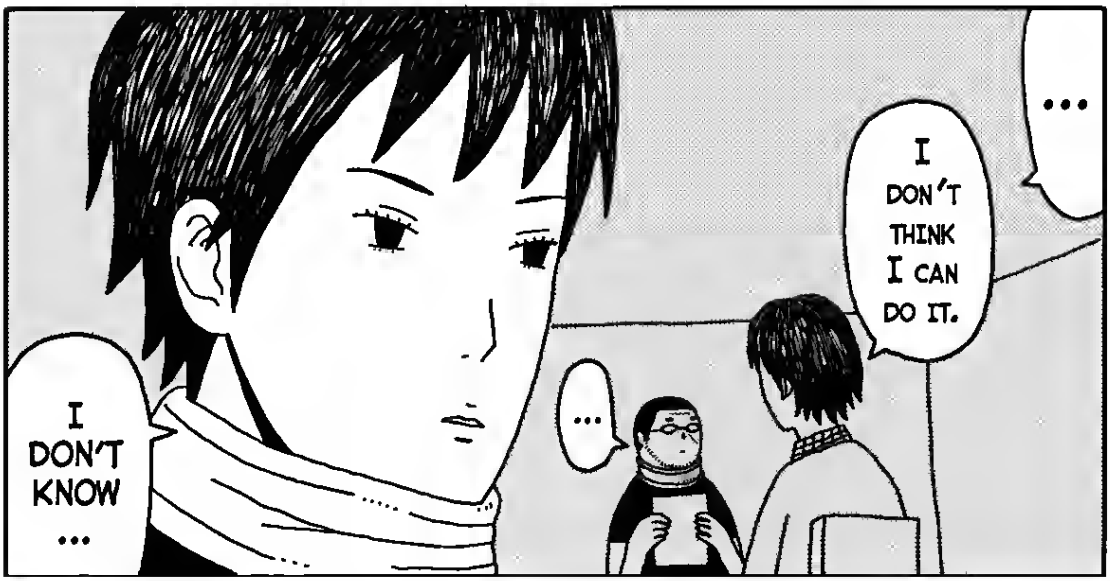
...
krackle
krackle

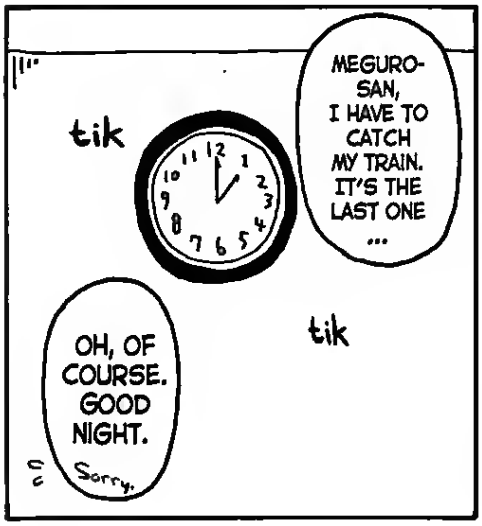

OKAY ... .
...
krackle
krackle
MAX

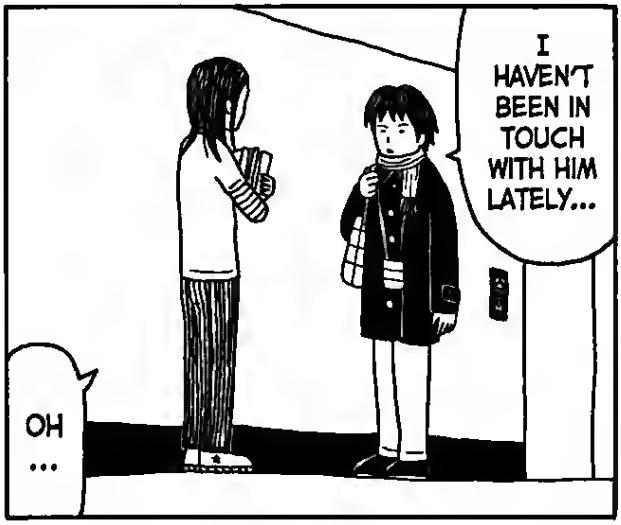
YOU IN THE NECK BRACE!
POLICE
sha
sha
HEY! YOU THERE!
YOU AREN'T ALLOWED TO BURN THINGS OUT HERE!
sha
sha
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
da da da daaaash
HUH?!
kaw
kaw
PUT THE FIRE OUT!
krak
krak
HEY, COME BACK HERE!

EKKE EDITORIAL
GOOD NIGHT, EVERYBODY.
SEE YOU TOMORROW!
EKKE
SURE ...
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU NOW, BUT...
Could I have a moment...?
OH, UNAMI-SAN...


...HOW'S OGURO-SAN DOING THESE DAYS?
Is he drawing manga?
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM HERE IN A WHILE...


...
I DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT.
...
I DON'T KNOW ...


MEGURO-SAN, I HAVE TO CATCH MY TRAIN. IT'S THE LAST ONE ...
tik
tik
OH, OF COURSE. GOOD NIGHT.
Sorry.


I HAVEN'T BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM LATELY...
OH ...

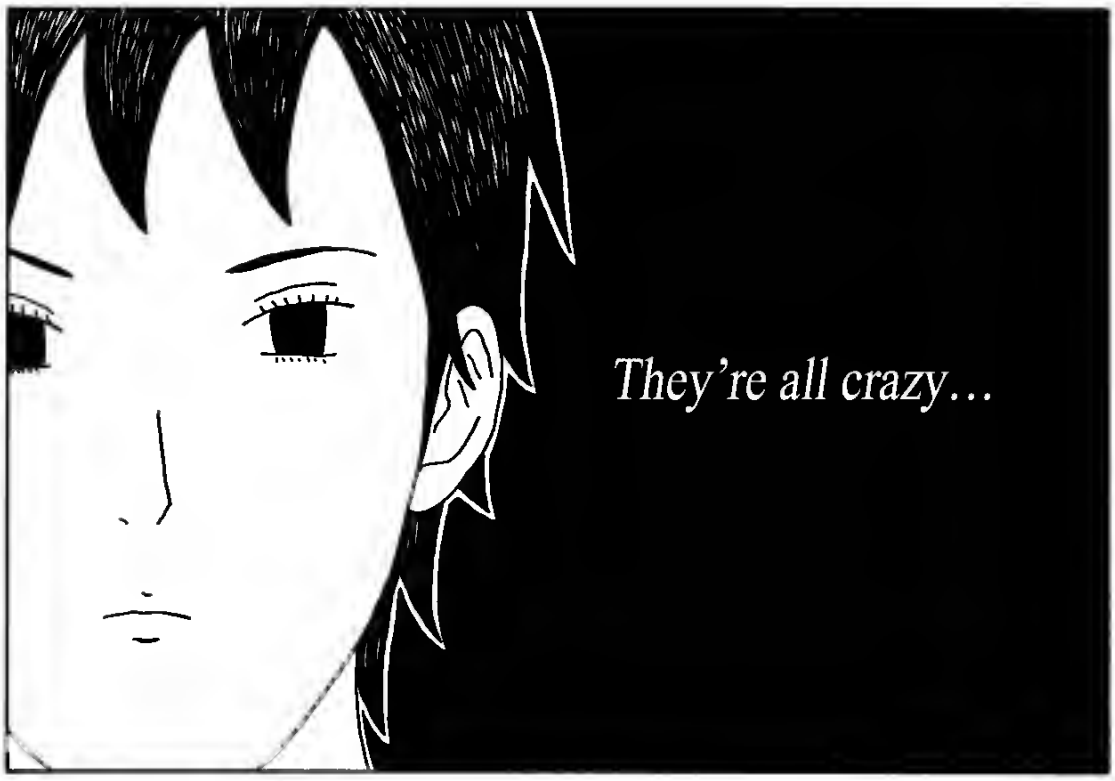
tok
...
tok
tok
HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE...
MAX
LONG TIME NO SEE...
UNAMI-SAN...
CHU
GAKU
KAN
YES ...?

WON'T YOU STAY WITH ME?
MAX

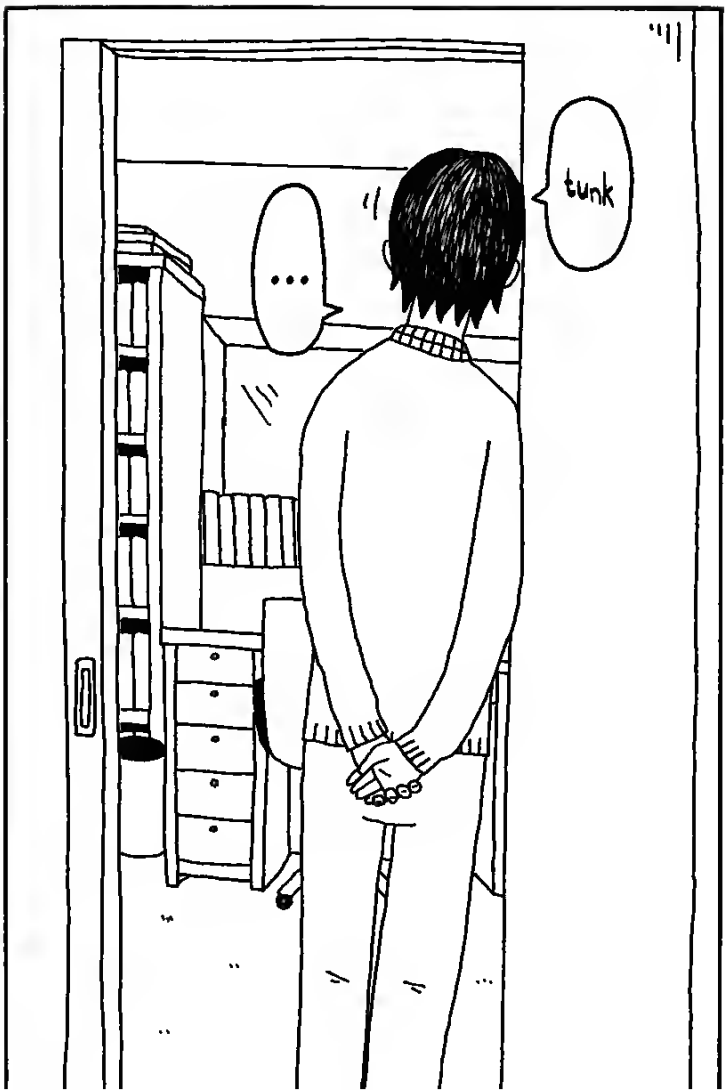
Bakery
Mi Yata
Bakery
Mi Yata

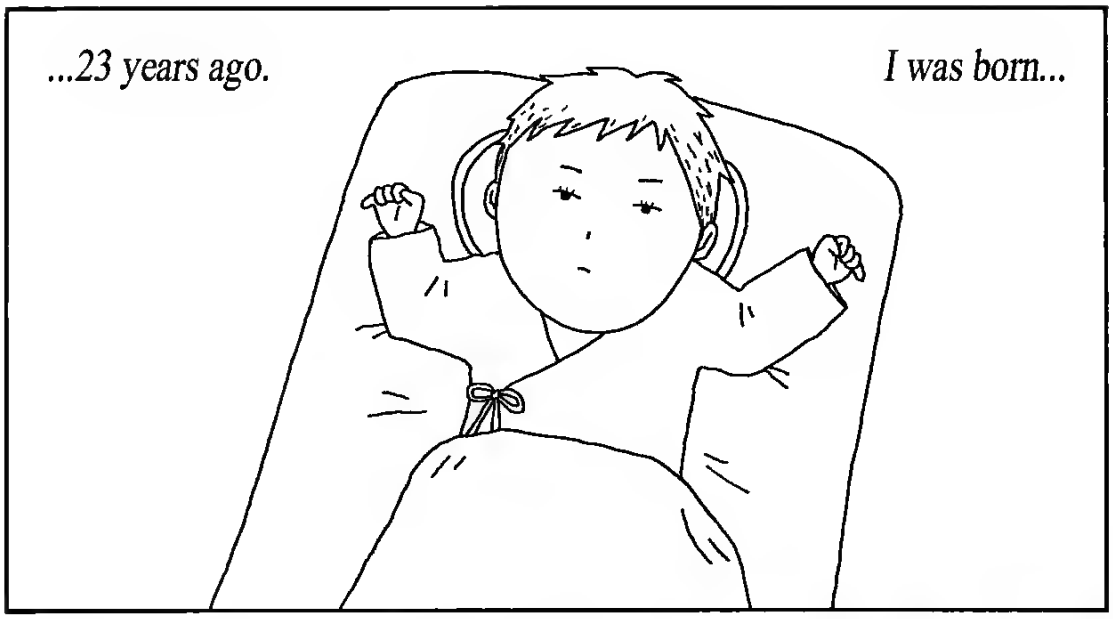
Bonus Chapter:

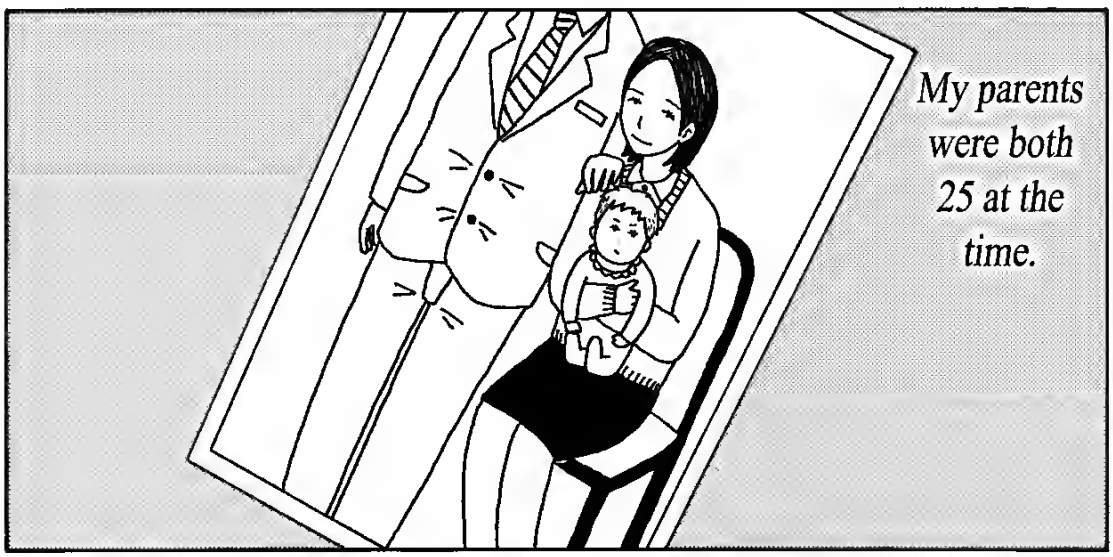
All About Aya Unami

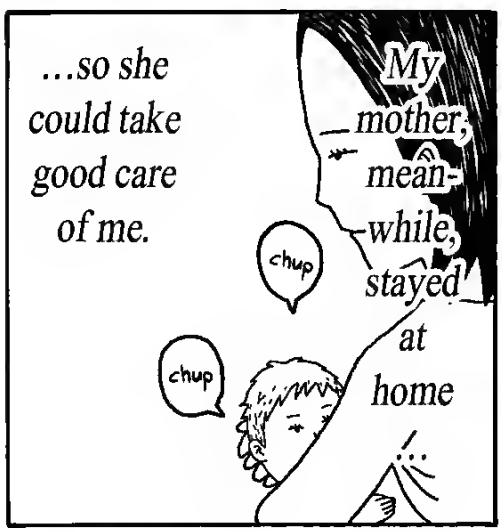


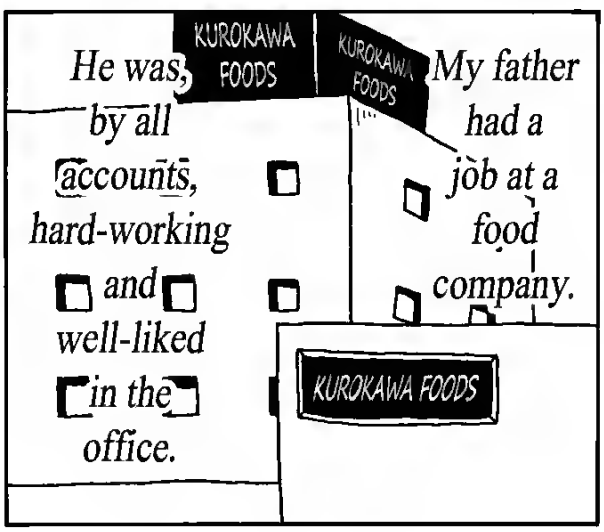
All of them…

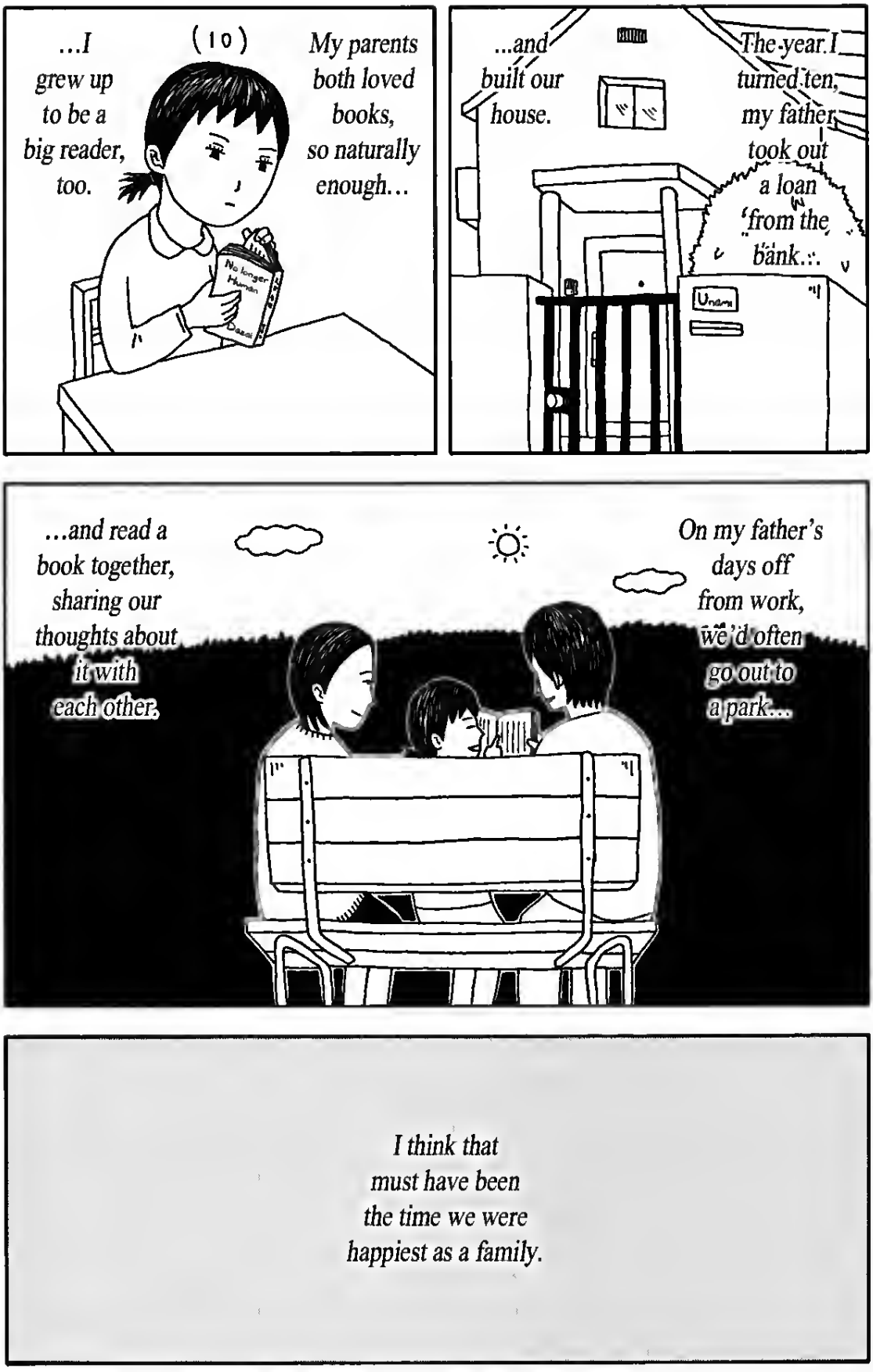



...23 years ago.
I was born...

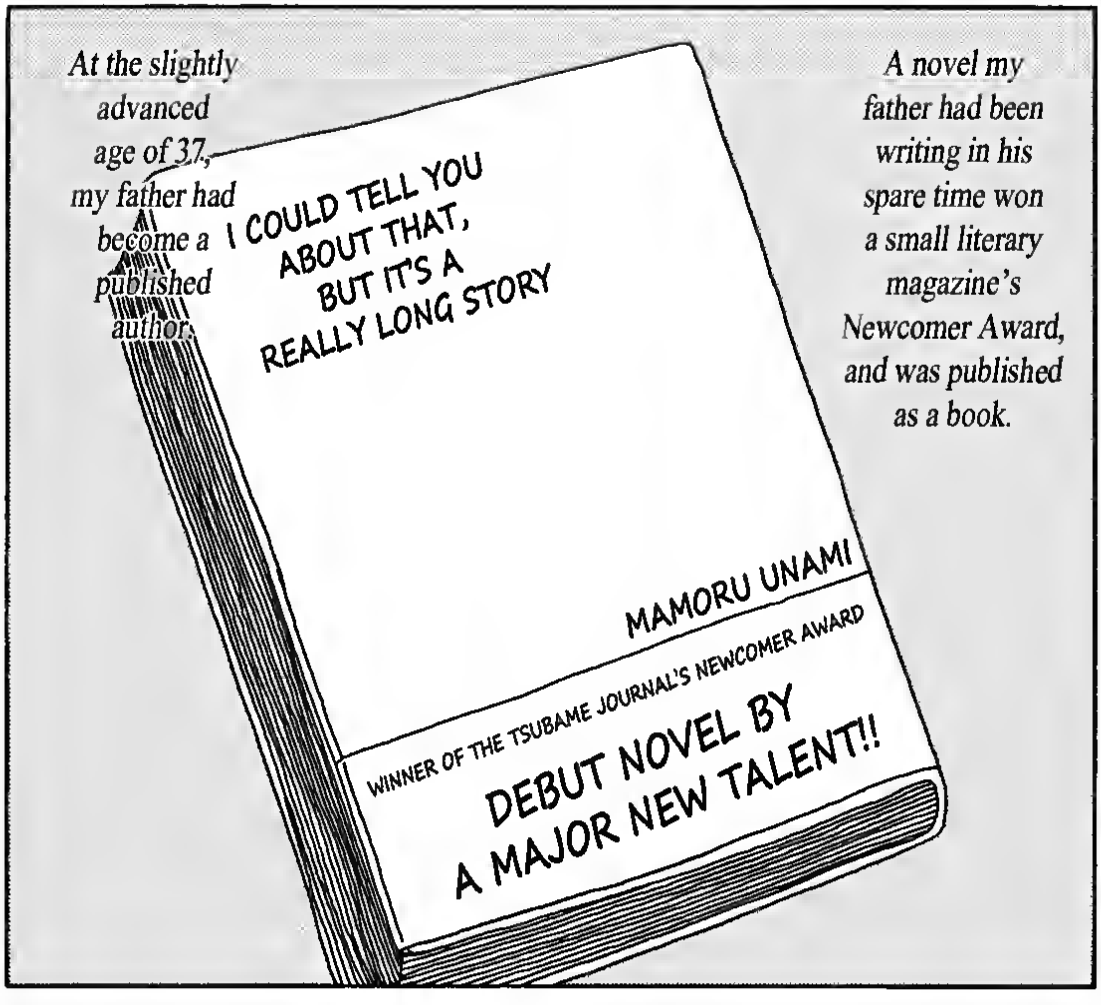

My parents were both 25 at the time.


...so she could take good care of me.
My mother, meanwhile, stayed at home
chup
chup

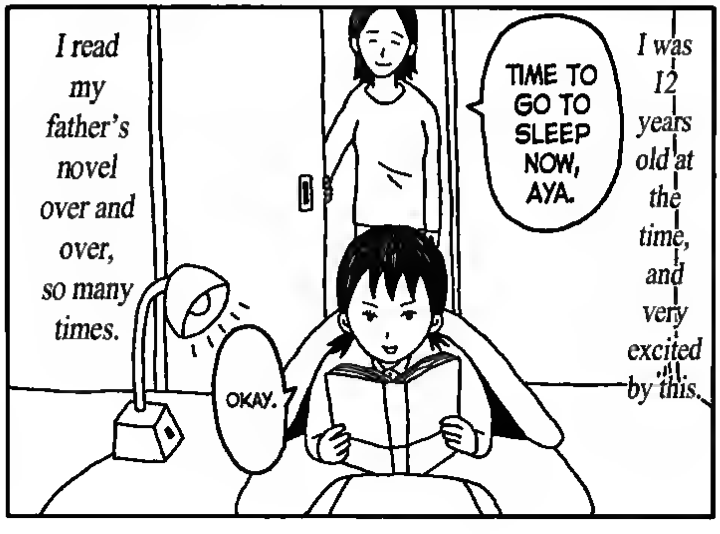

He was, by all accounts, hard-working and well-liked in the office.
KUROKAWA FOODS
KUROKAWA FOODS
My father had a job at a food company.
KUROKAWA FOODS

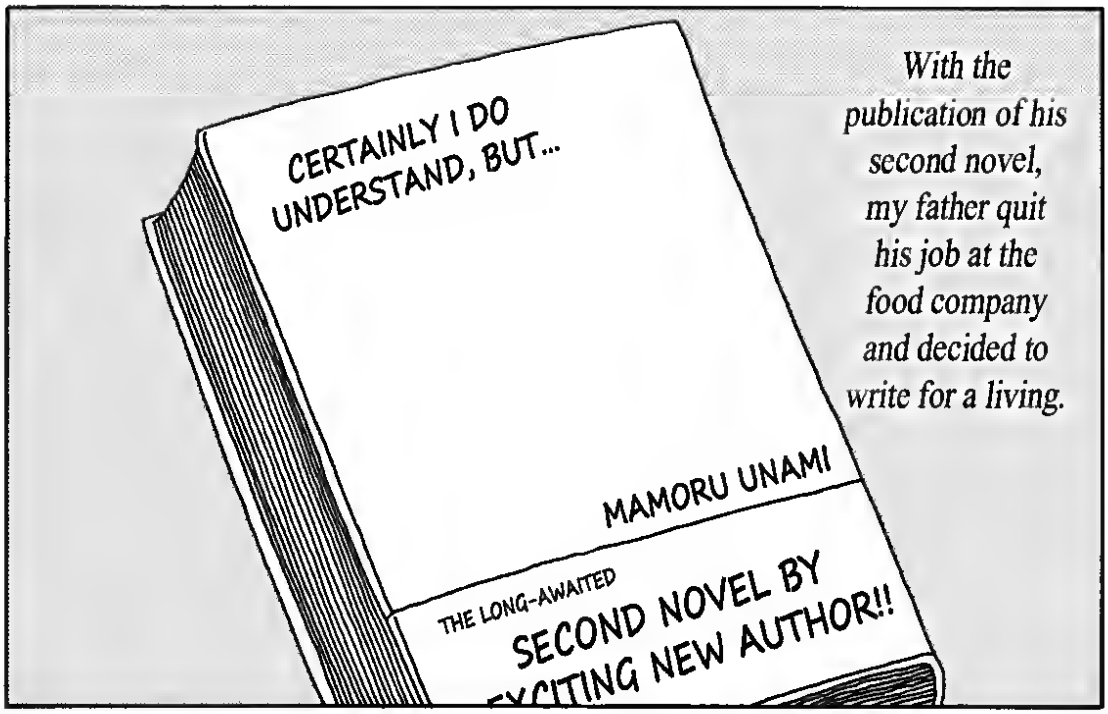

(10)
...I grew up to be a big reader, too.
My parents both loved books, so naturally enough...
No longer Human
...and built our house.
The year I turned ten, my father took out a loan from the bank...
...and read a book together, sharing our thoughts about it with each other.
On my father's days off from work, we'd often go out to a park...
I think that must have been the time we were happiest as a family.

Two years later.


At the slightly advanced age of 37, my father had become a published author.
I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THAT, BUT IT'S A REALLY LONG STORY
MAMORU UNAMI
WINNER OF THE TSUBAME JOURNAL'S NEWCOMER AWARD
DEBUT NOVEL BY A MAJOR NEW TALENT!!
A novel my father had been writing in his spare time won a small literary magazine's Newcomer Award, and was published as a book.

In fact, I could still recite practically the whole thing today.

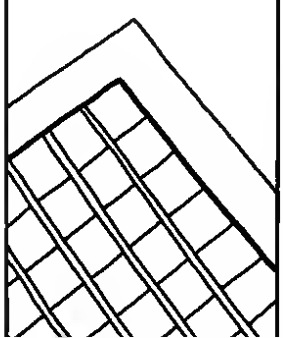

I read my father's novel over and over, so many times.
TIME TO GO TO SLEEP NOW, AYA.
I was 12 years old at the time, and very excited by this.
OKAY.

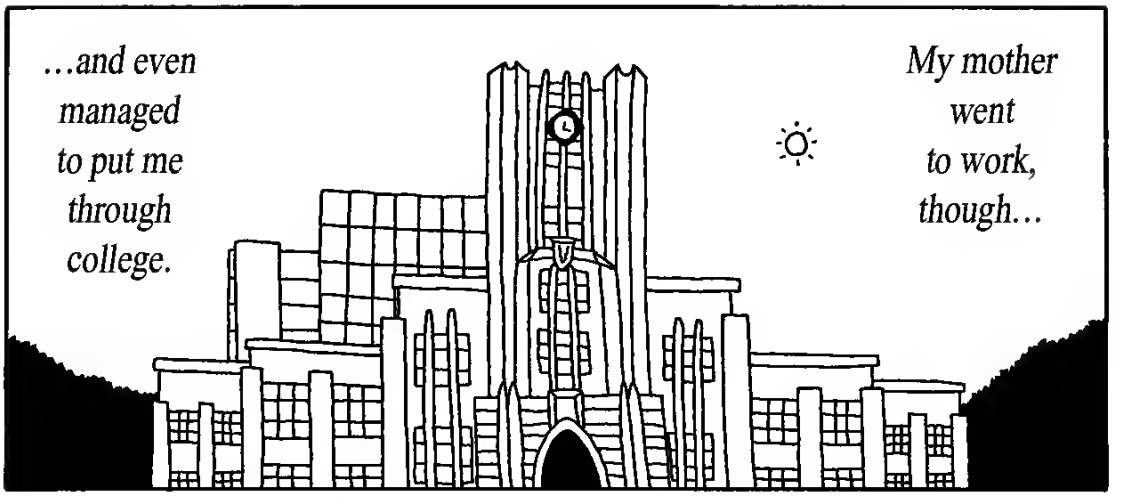

CERTAINLY I DO UNDERSTAND, BUT...
MAMORU UNAMI
THE LONG-AWAITED
SECOND NOVEL BY
EXCITING NEW AUTHOR!!
With the publication of his second novel, my father quit his job at the food company and decided to write for a living.

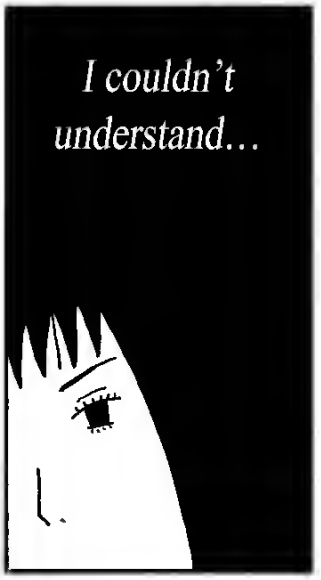
My father's books didn't sell...

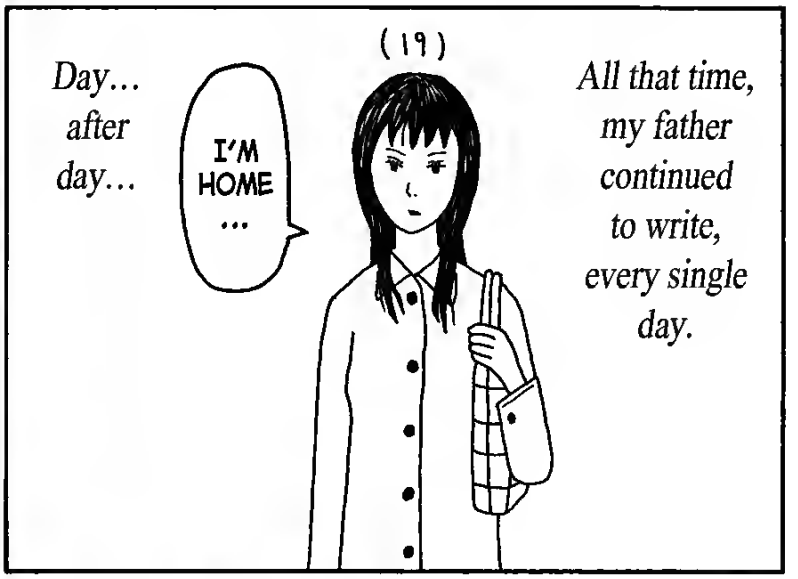
But...

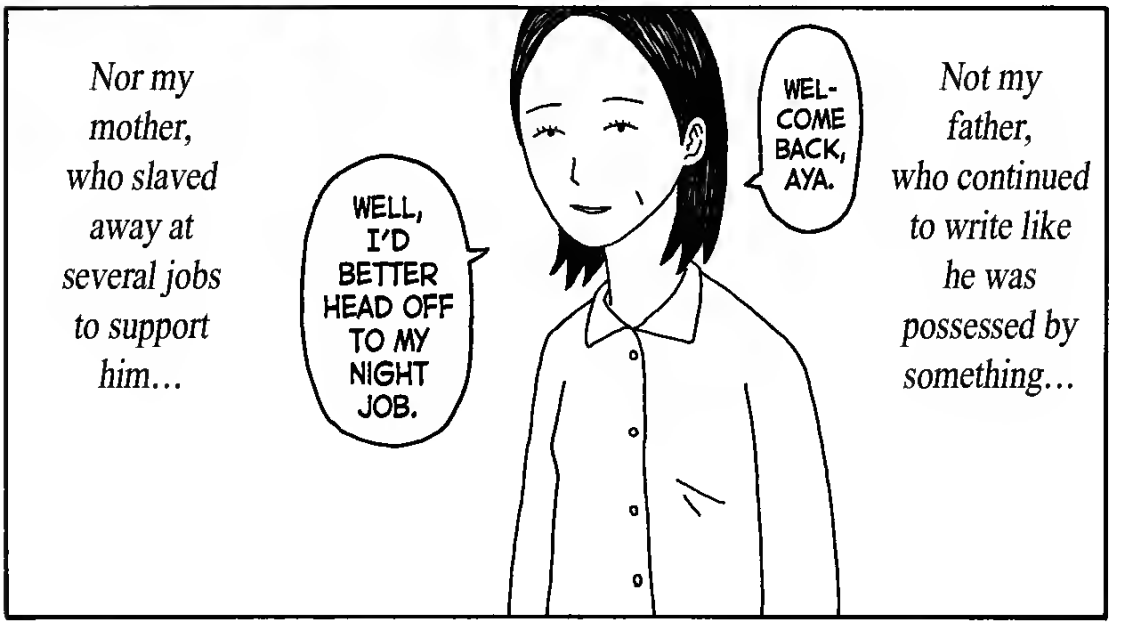
...he hasn't been able to publish a single thing.




...and even managed to put me through college.
My mother went to work, though...


I couldn't understand...


(19)
Day... after day...
I'M HOME ...
All that time, my father continued to write, every single day.


Nor my mother, who slaved away at several jobs to support him...
WELL, I'D BETTER HEAD OFF TO MY NIGHT JOB.
WEL-COME BACK, AYA.
Not my father, who continued to write like he was possessed by something...

KRCH

KRCH

Before long, I found myself less interested in books than in the people who wrote them.

After I graduated from college, I got a job at a publishing company.

CHU GAKU KAN

KRCH

...

KRCH

...but I was assigned to a comic magazine instead.

I'd hoped to work on a literary journal...

¥650

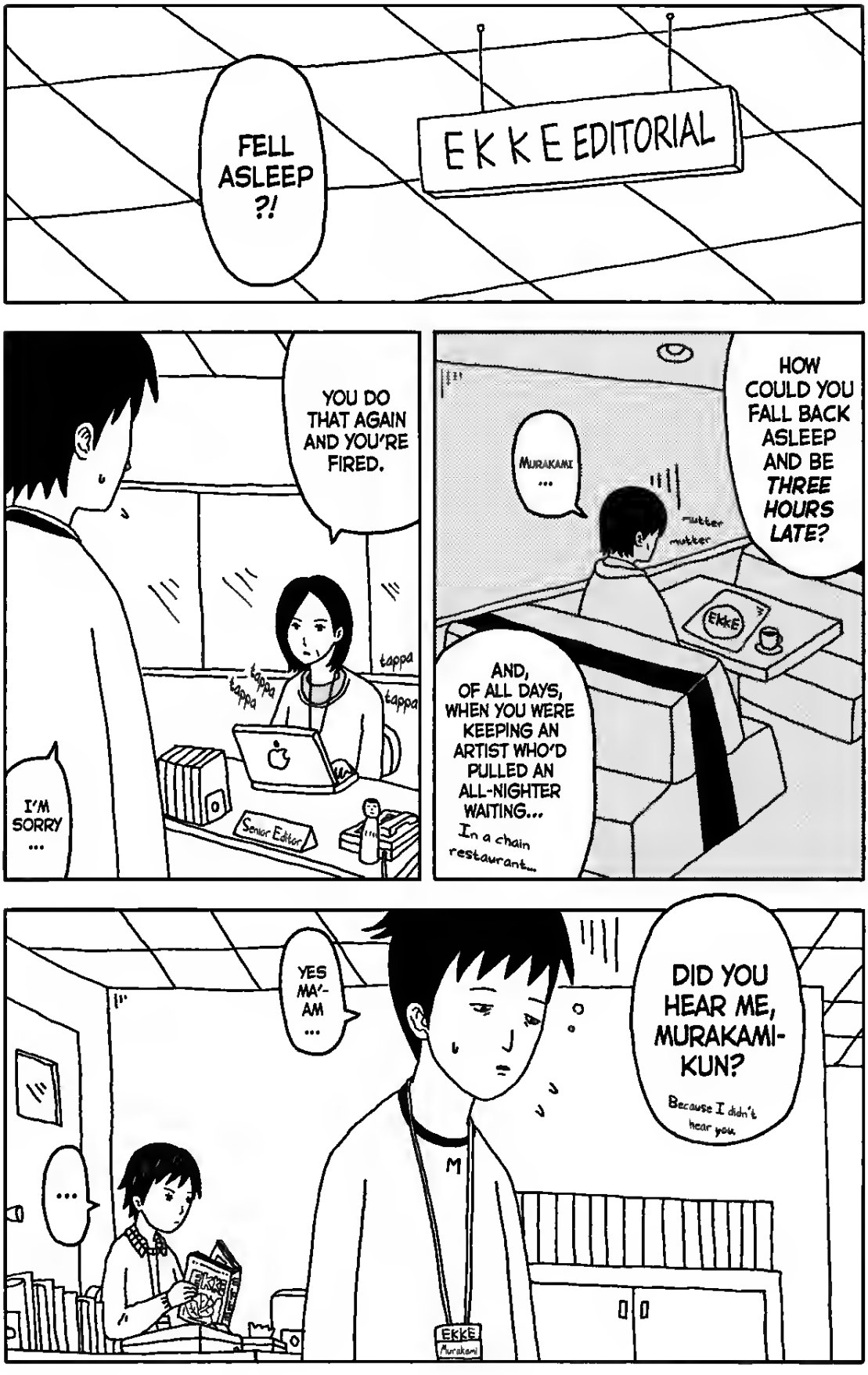
Monthly April issue

EKKE

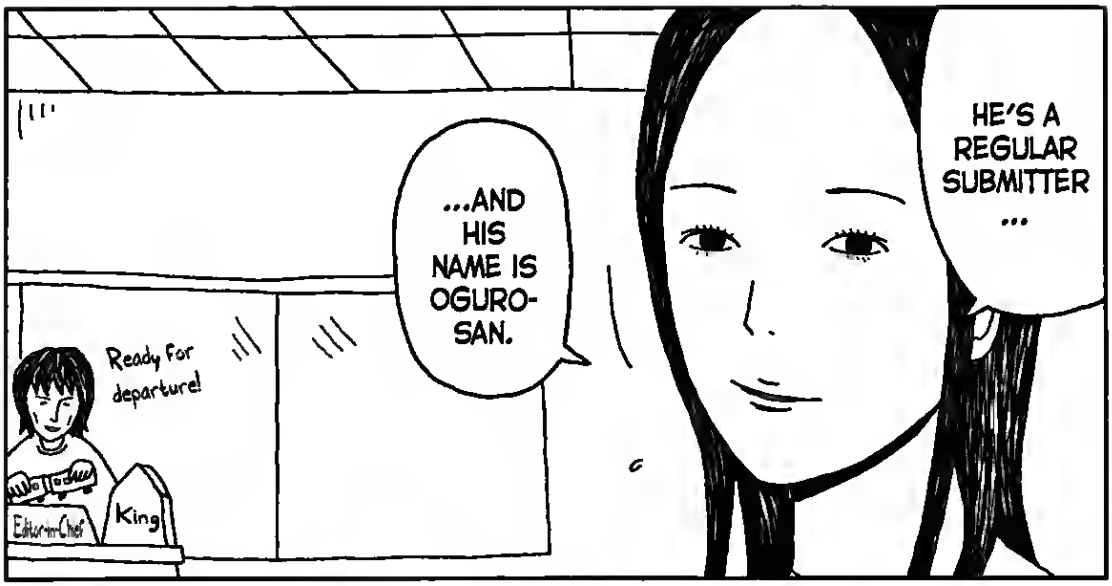
Vegetables

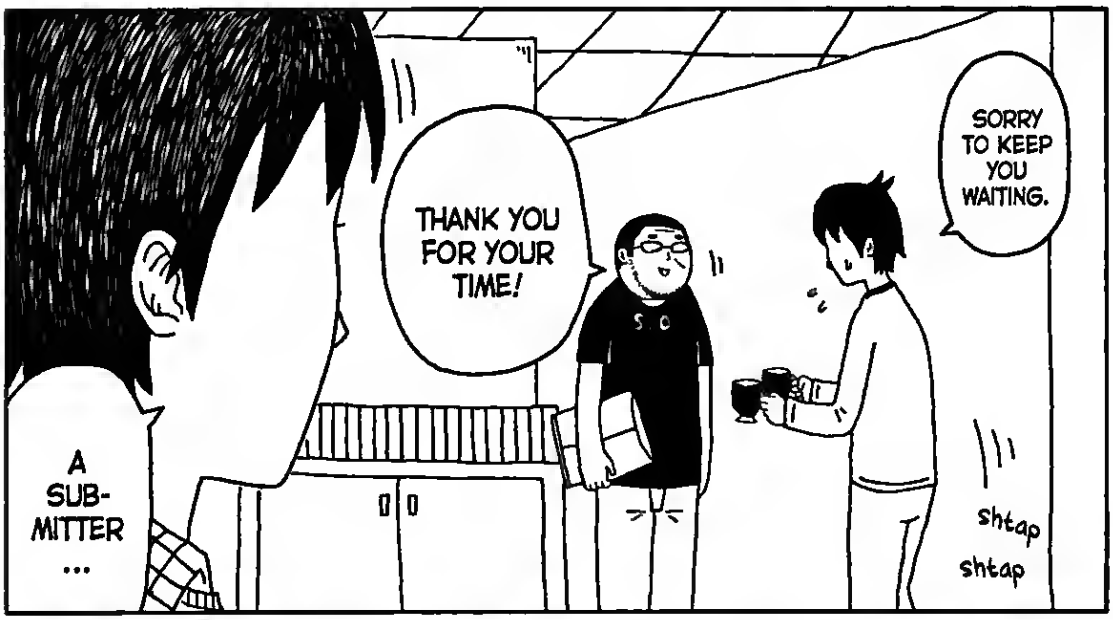
Fresh new series

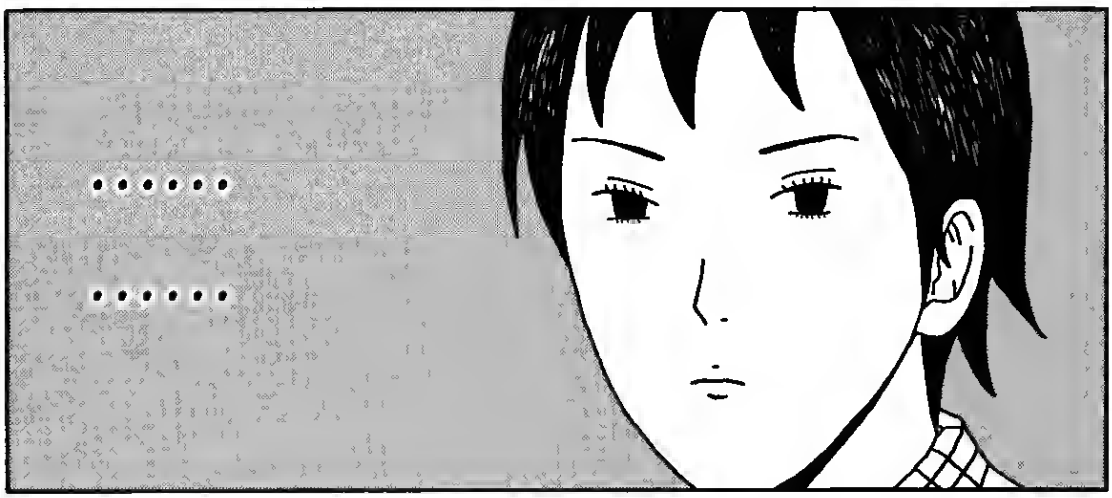
Latest installment of the super-

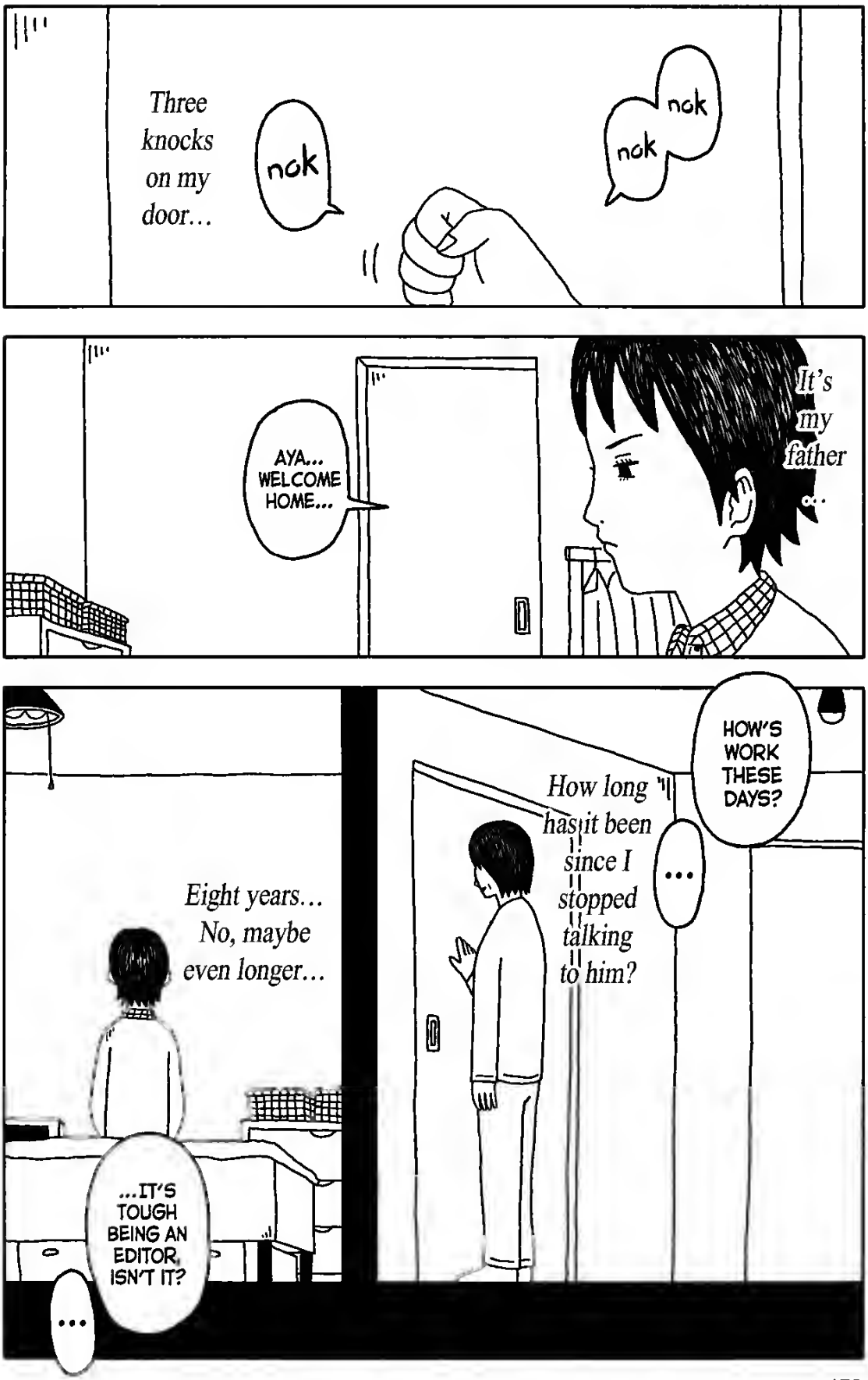

FELL ASLEEP ?!
EKKE EDITORIAL
YOU DO THAT AGAIN AND YOU'RE FIRED.
tappa
tappa
tappa
tappa
Senior Editor
I'M SORRY ...
HOW COULD YOU FALL BACK ASLEEP AND BE THREE HOURS LATE?
MURAKAMI ...
mutter mutter
EKKE
AND, OF ALL DAYS, WHEN YOU WERE KEEPING AN ARTIST WHO'D PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER WAITING...
In a chain restaurant...
DID YOU HEAR ME, MURAKAMI-KUN?
Because I didn't hear you.
YES MA'-AM ...
...
EKKE
Murakami

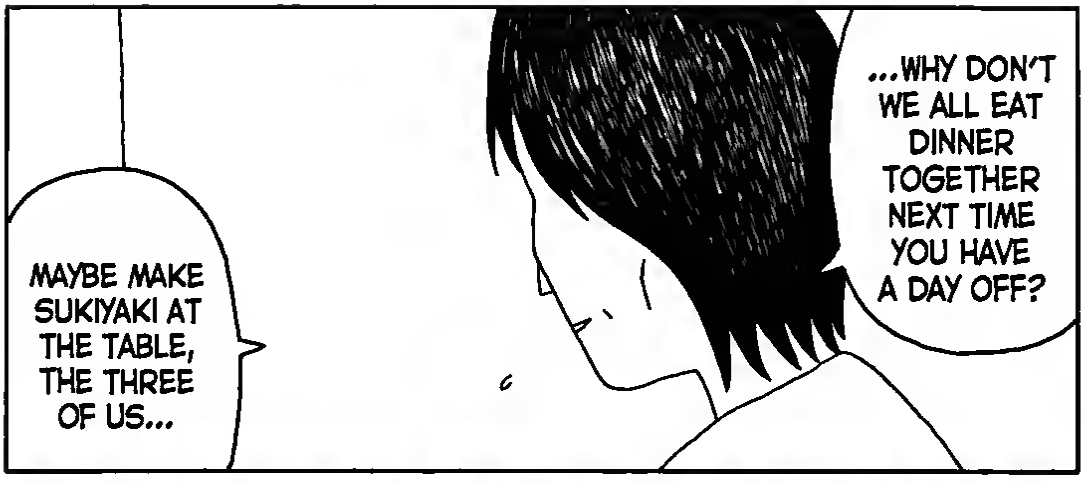
HEL-LOO!
dip
YOU HAVE A VISITOR.
MURA-KAMI-SAN.
katta
katta
OOPS.
I'd forgotten...
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE SENSEI THERE?
Which series does he do?
HUH?
THAT ONE WITH THE LOUD VOICE...
EKKE EDITORIAL
Flik
MEG-URO-SAN.
YES?
OUT NOW!
BABY &ika
A GOOD DAY TO YOU!
that person
OHH, UH, THAT PERSON ISN'T A SENSEI YET, ACTUALLY...
...HE ISN'T?
Yet?
EKKE 4
EKKE 5
EKKE 6
EKKE 7
EKKE 8

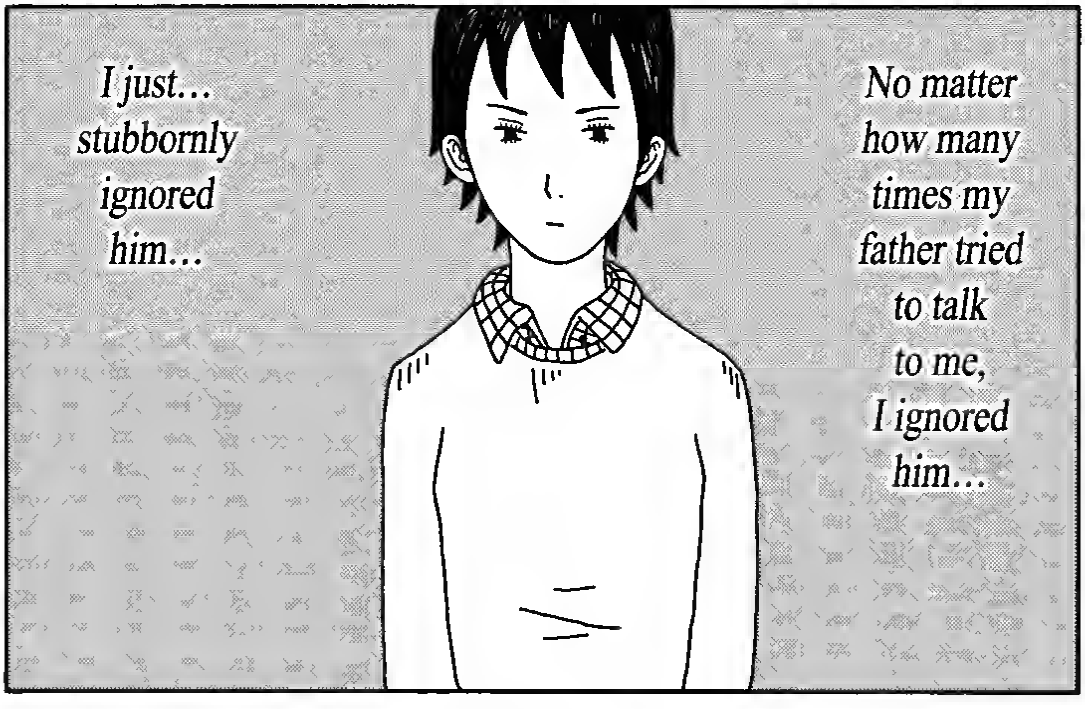

HE'S A REGULAR SUBMITTER ...
...AND HIS NAME IS OGURO-SAN.
Ready for departure!
Editor-in-Chief
King


SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!
A SUB-MITTER ...
shtap
shtap

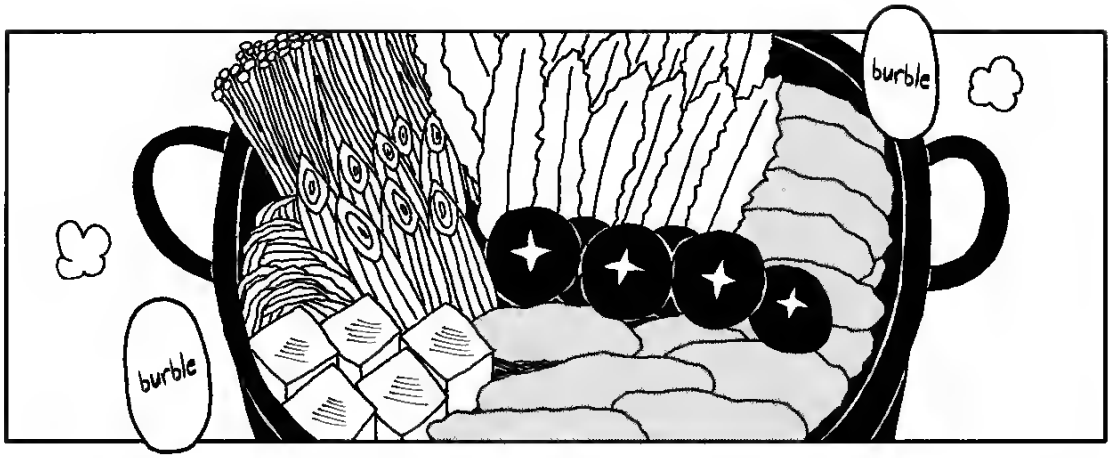

.....
.....

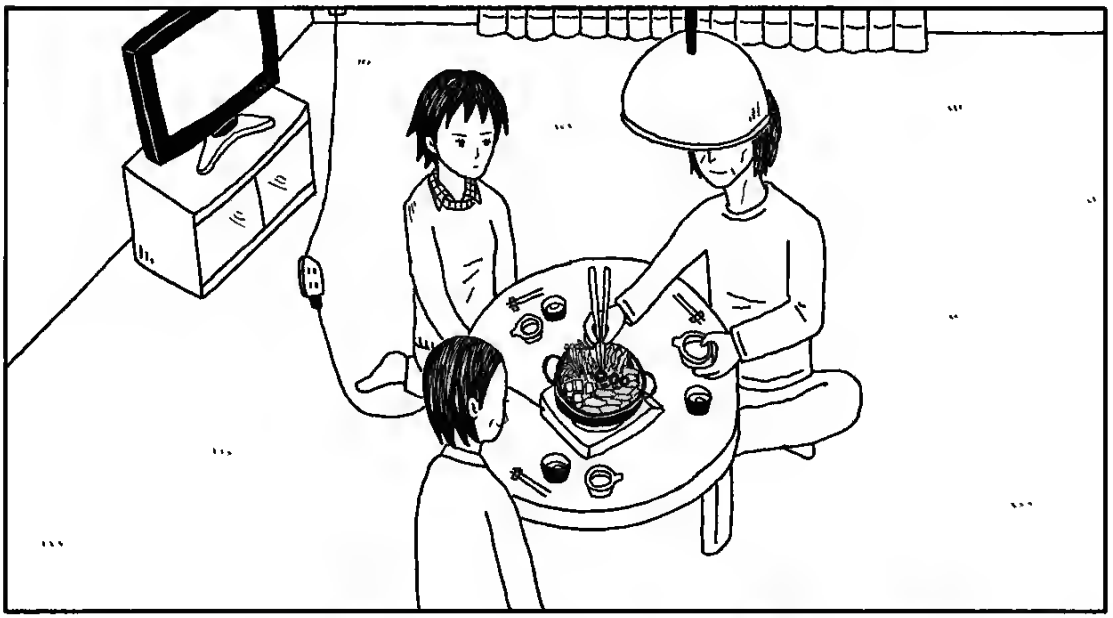

Three knocks on my door...
nok
nok
nok
AYA... WELCOME HOME...
It's my father...
HOW'S WORK THESE DAYS?
...
How long has it been since I stopped talking to him?
Eight years... No, maybe even longer...
...IT'S TOUGH BEING AN EDITOR, ISN'T IT?
...

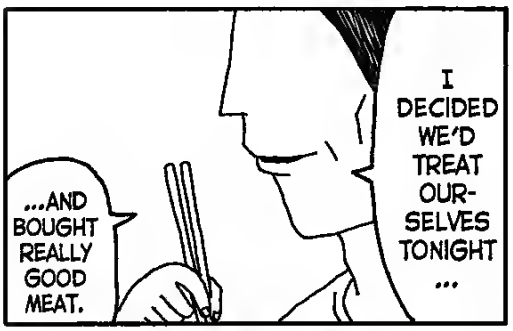

MAYBE MAKE SUKIYAKI AT THE TABLE, THE THREE OF US...
...WHY DON'T WE ALL EAT DINNER TOGETHER NEXT TIME YOU HAVE A DAY OFF?


I just... stubbornly ignored him...
No matter how many times my father tried to talk to me, I ignored him...

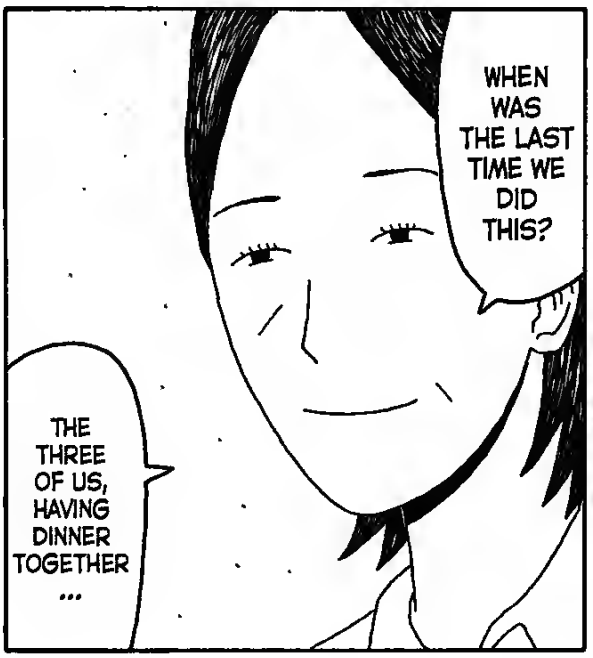
Giving him the silent treatment...
GOOD NIGHT ...
Thinking back now, maybe I was taking the easy way out...

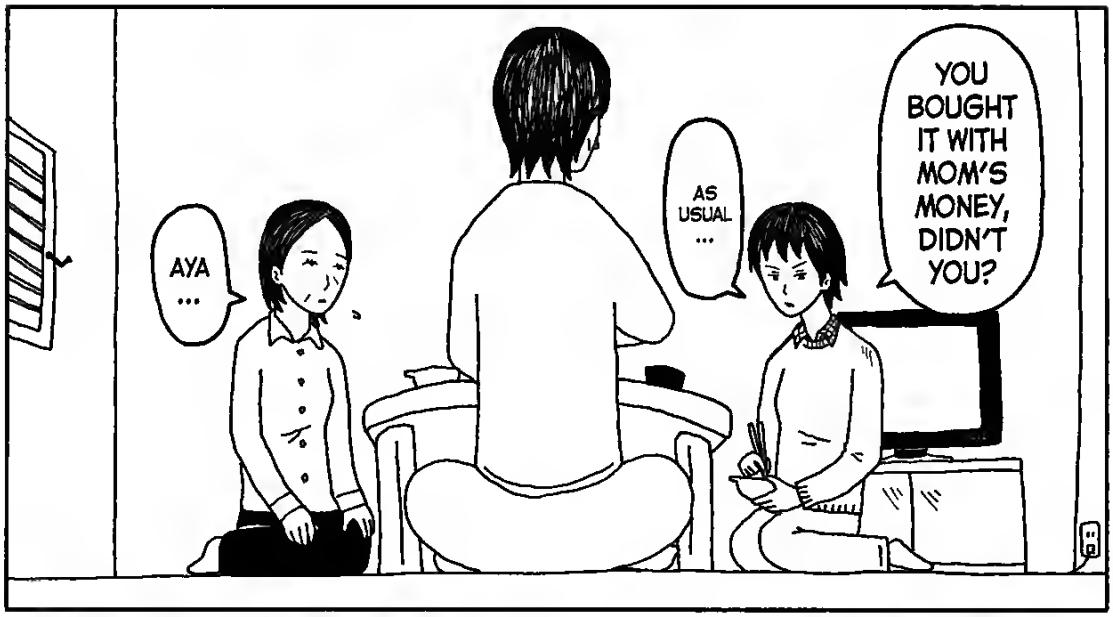

burble
burble




I DECIDED WE'D TREAT OUR-SELVES TONIGHT ...
...AND BOUGHT REALLY GOOD MEAT.

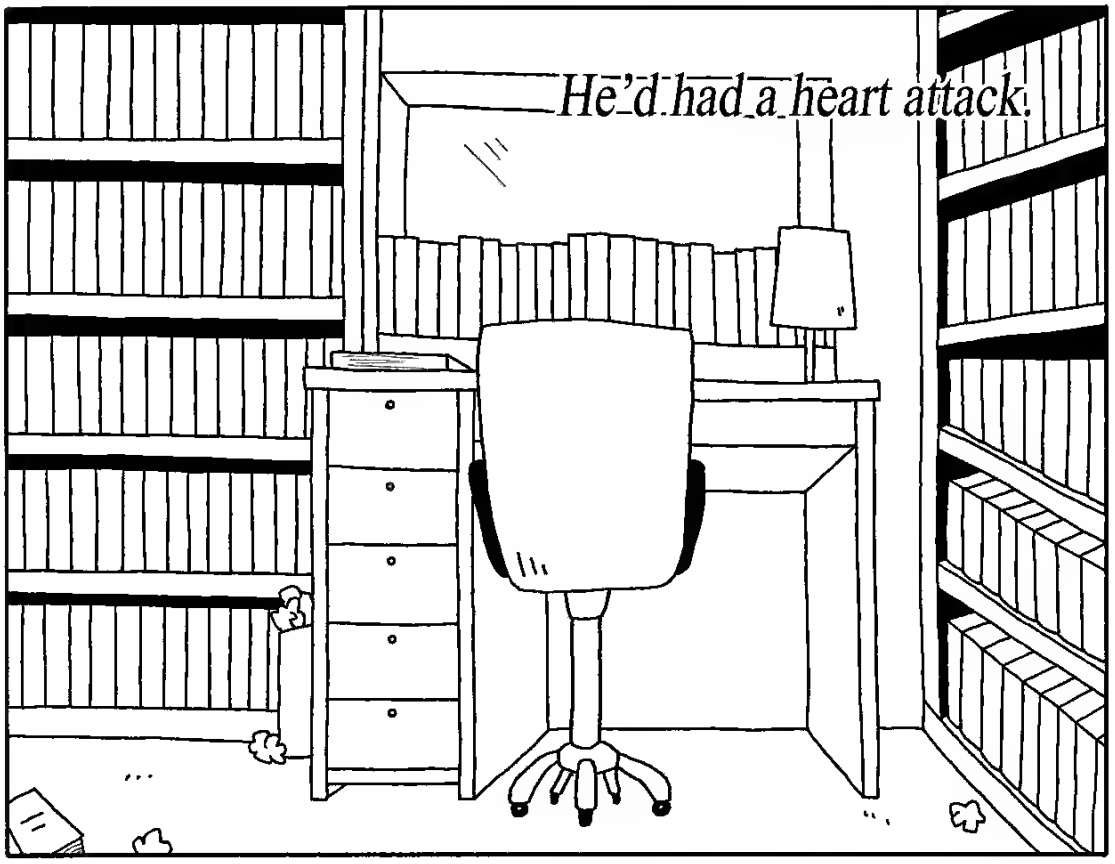
EAT UP, AYA. ENJOY IT!
...

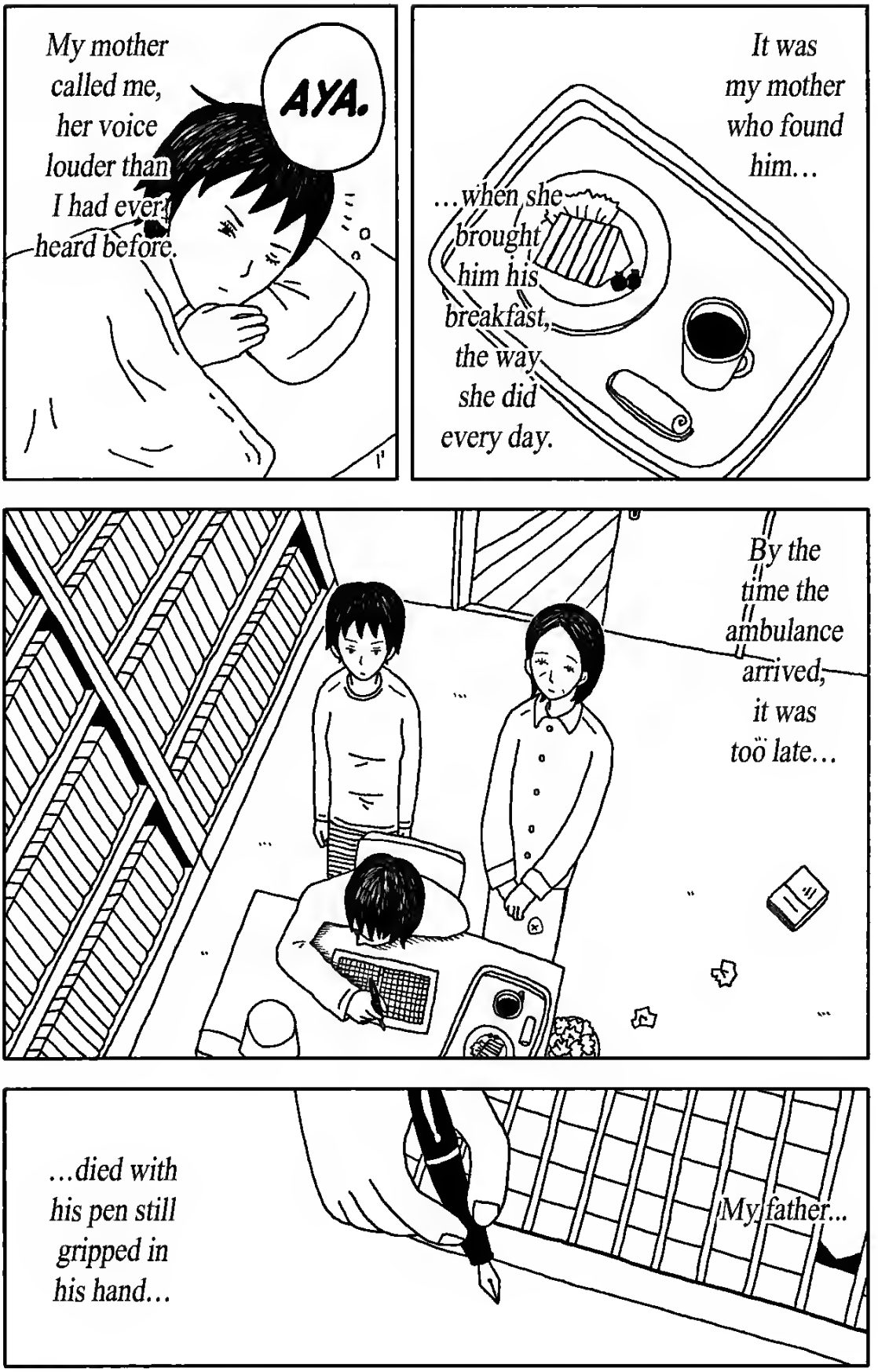

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WE DID THIS?
THE THREE OF US, HAVING DINNER TOGETHER ...

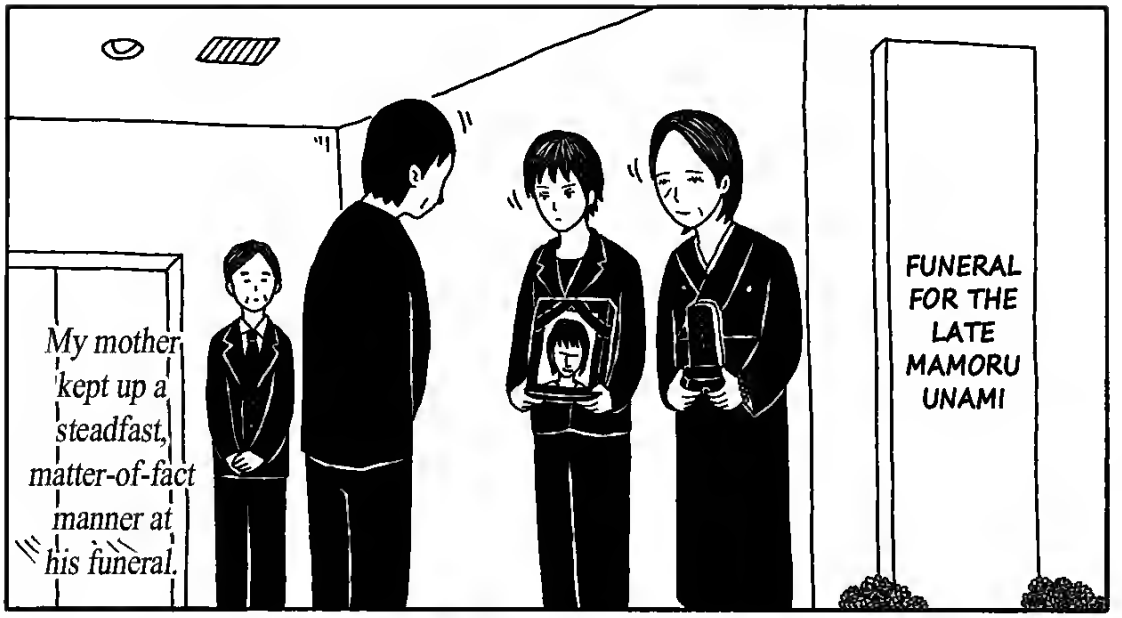


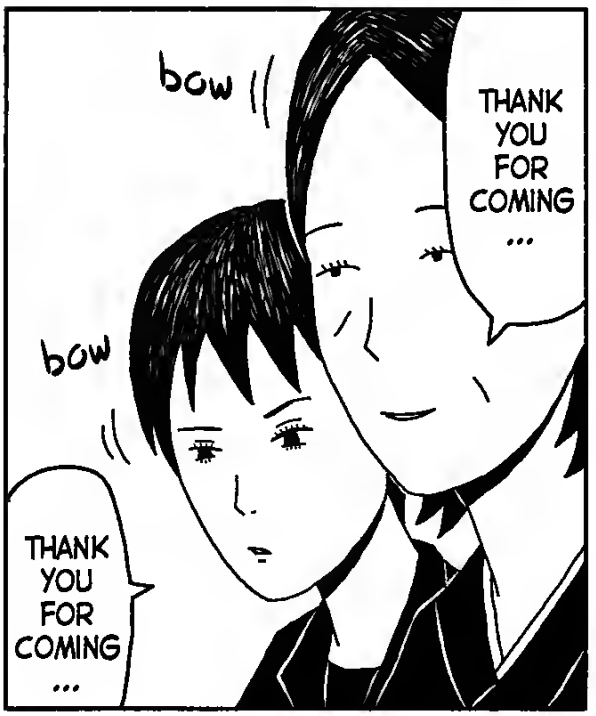
Those were the last words I ever spoke to my father...

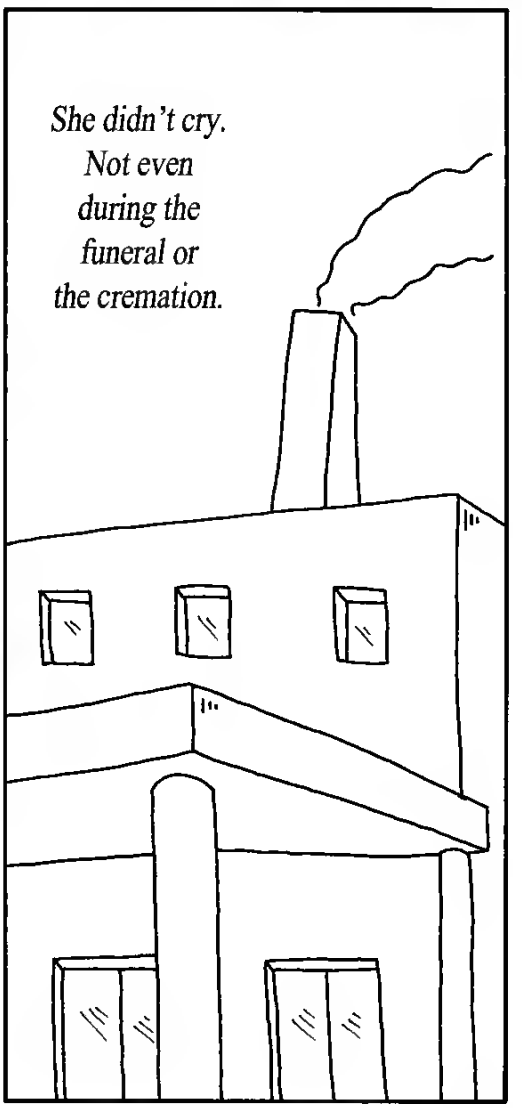
...he was dead.
The next morning...

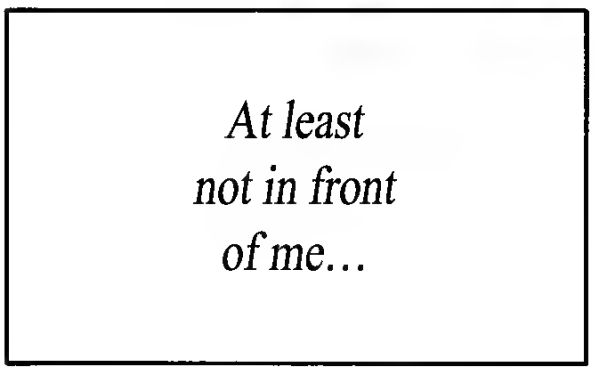

He'd had a heart attack.


My mother called me, her voice louder than I had ever heard before.
AYA.
It was my mother who found him...
...when she brought him his breakfast, the way she did every day.
By the time the ambulance arrived, it was too late...
...died with his pen still gripped in his hand...
My father...

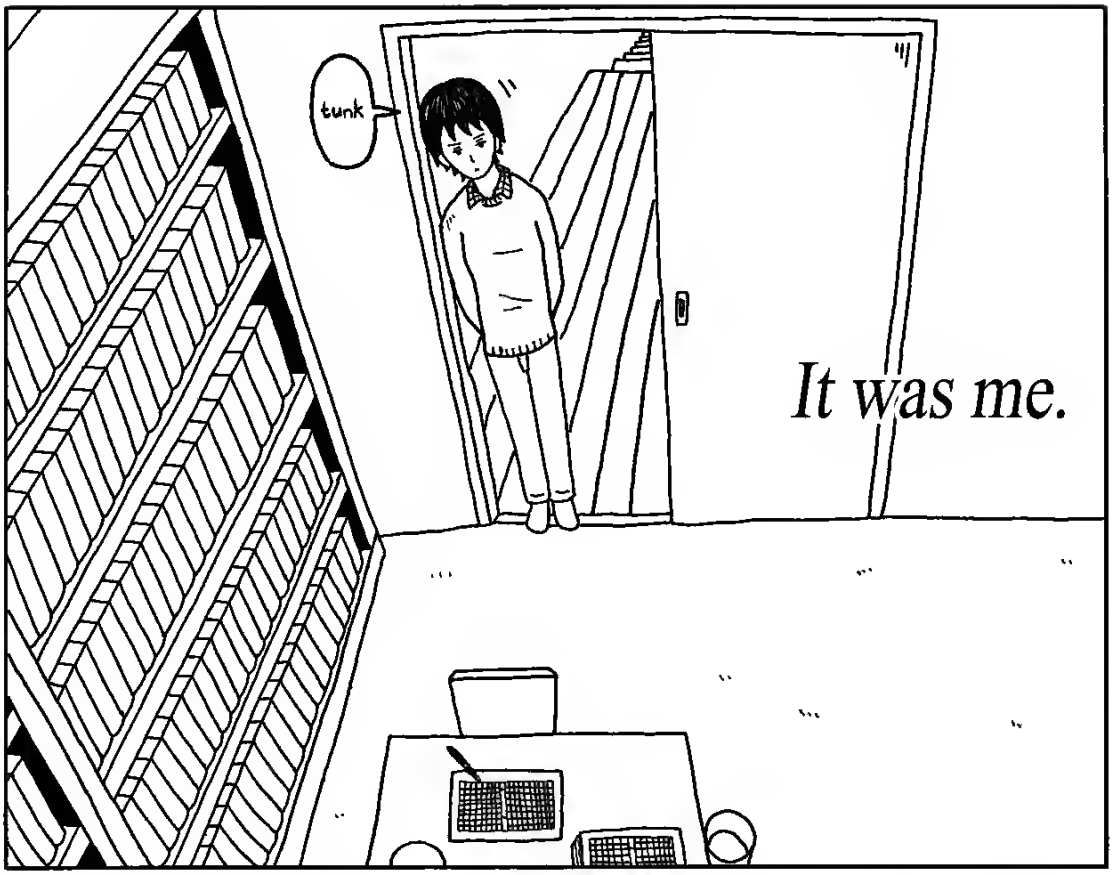

My mother kept up a steadfast, matter-of-fact manner at his funeral.
FUNERAL FOR THE LATE MAMORU UNAMI

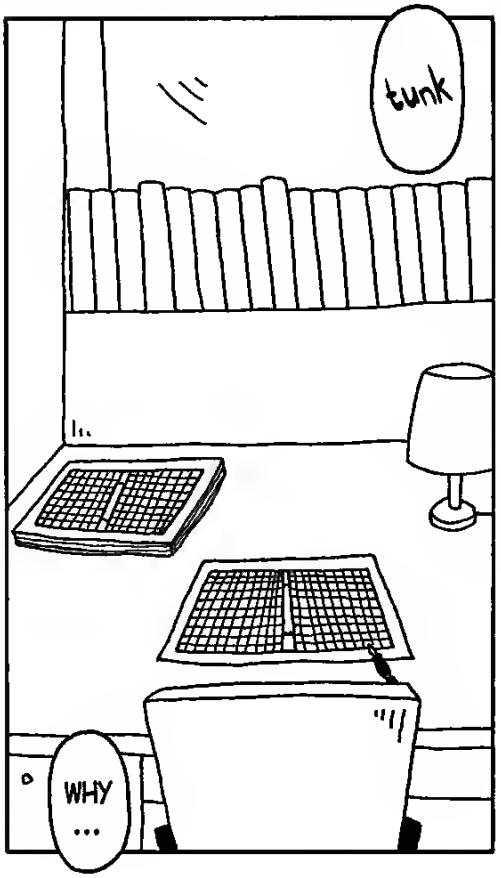

bow
THANK YOU FOR COMING ...
bow
THANK YOU FOR COMING ...

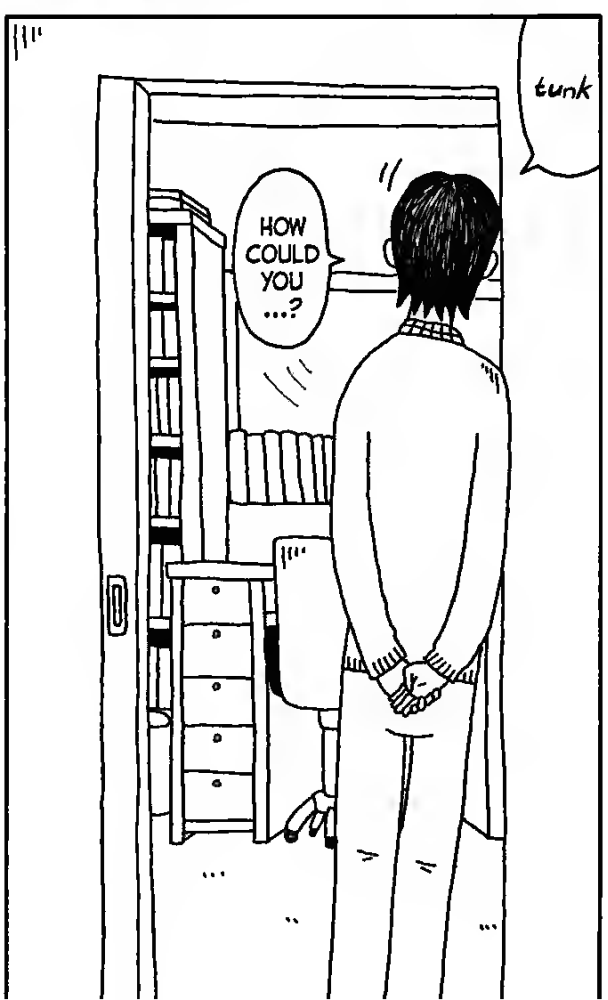

She didn't cry. Not even during the funeral or the cremation.


At least not in front of me...

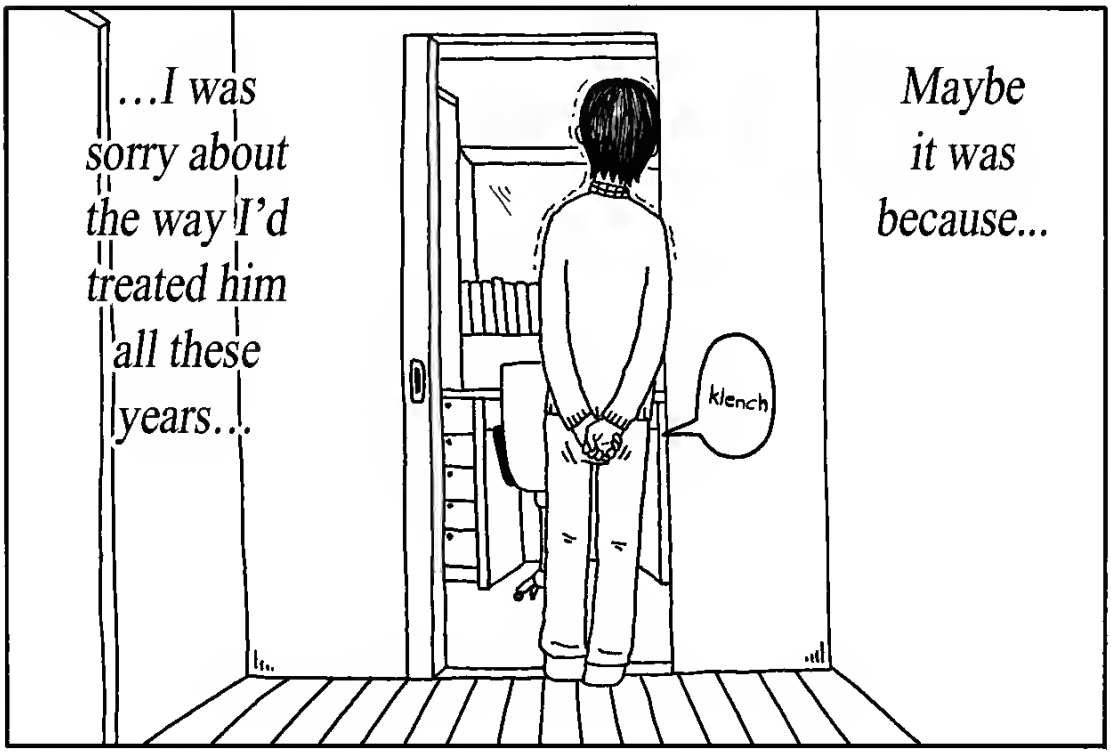
There was just one thing I understood when my father died...
SSWUP
...was neither my father, nor my mother... ...nor anyone else...
The person who'd most been awaiting the completion of his latest novel...


tunk
It was me.

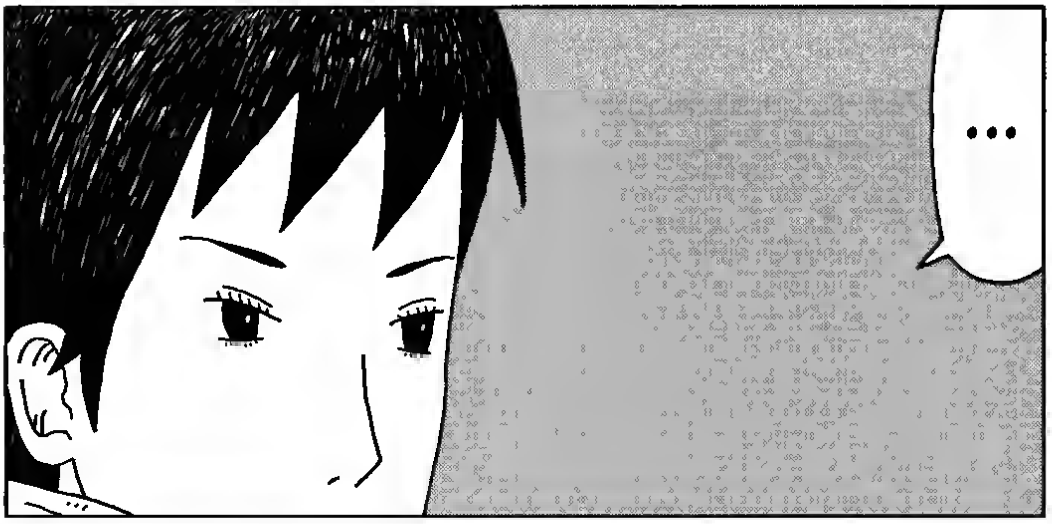

tunk
WHY
...


tunk
HOW COULD YOU ...?

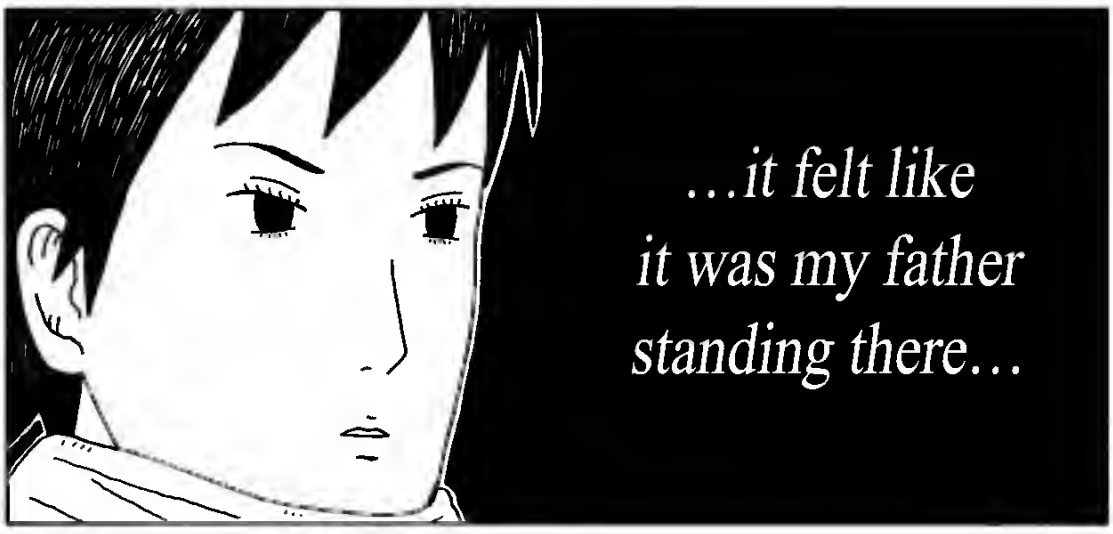
...
DID YOU HAVE TO UP AND DIE...?


...I was sorry about the way I'd treated him all these years...
klench
Maybe it was because...

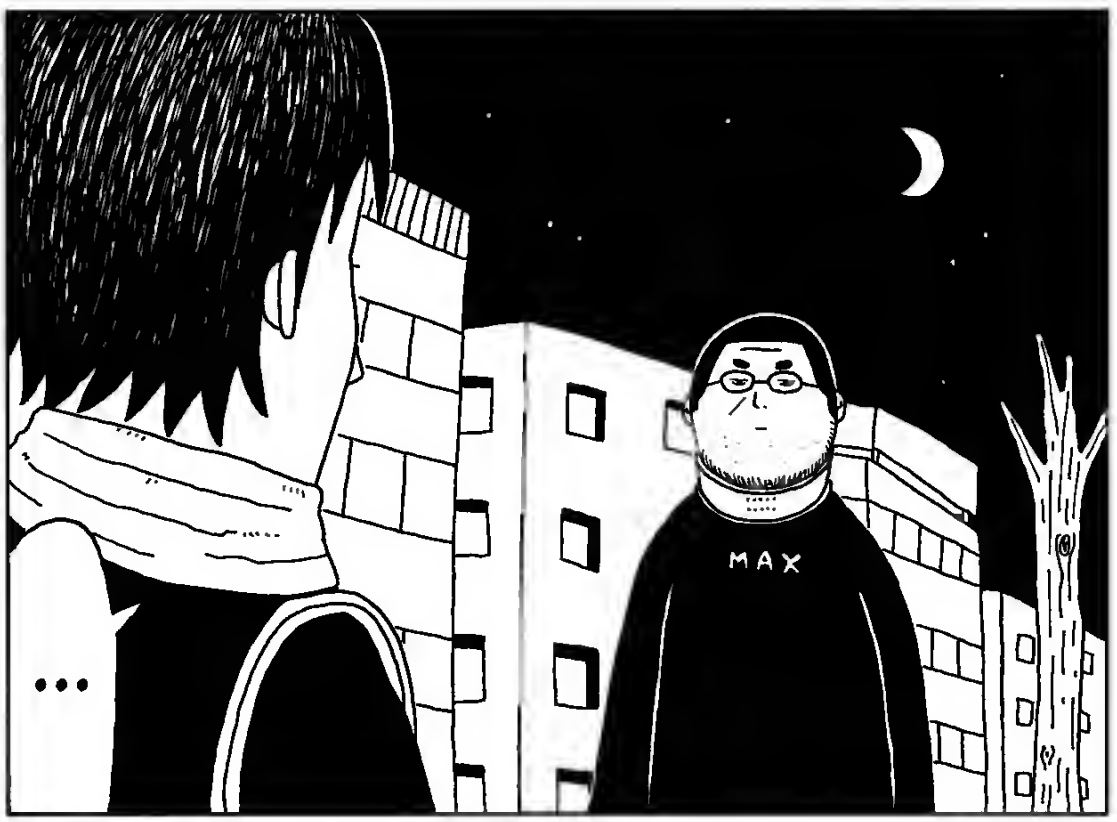
WON'T YOU STAY WITH ME?
BEEP
BEEEEP
MAX



...that for a moment...


...it felt like
it was my father
standing there...

PLEASE TAKE ME ON AGAIN!
ping


...
MAX

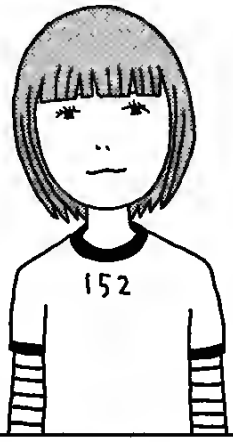
And Oguro-san…
My father…
My mother…
They're all crazy...
...I'M BRUTALLY HONEST.
And me, too…
AS YOU KNOW.
CHU
GAKU
KAN

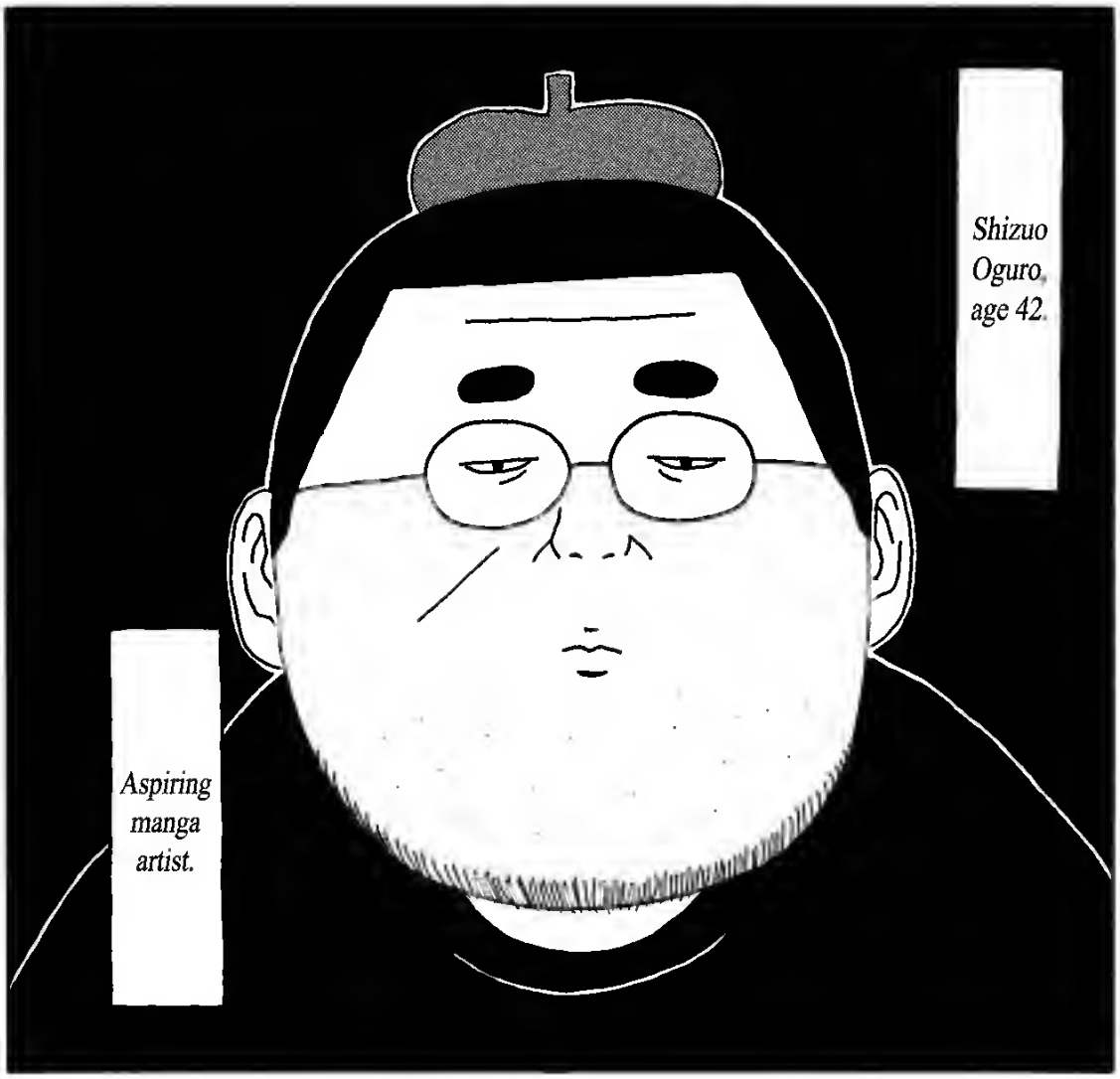
...Shall we shake on it?
MAX
Shwa

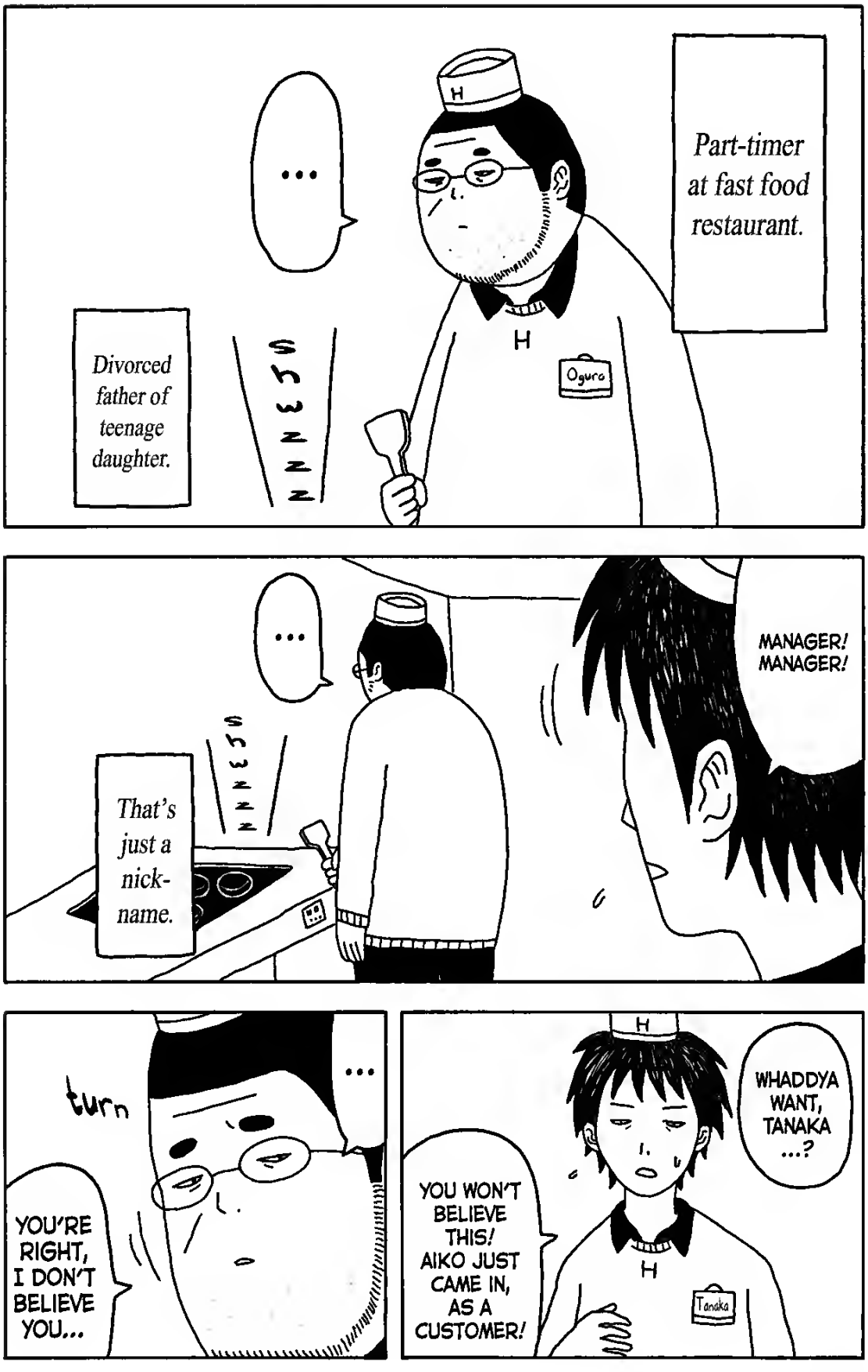
No, thank you.

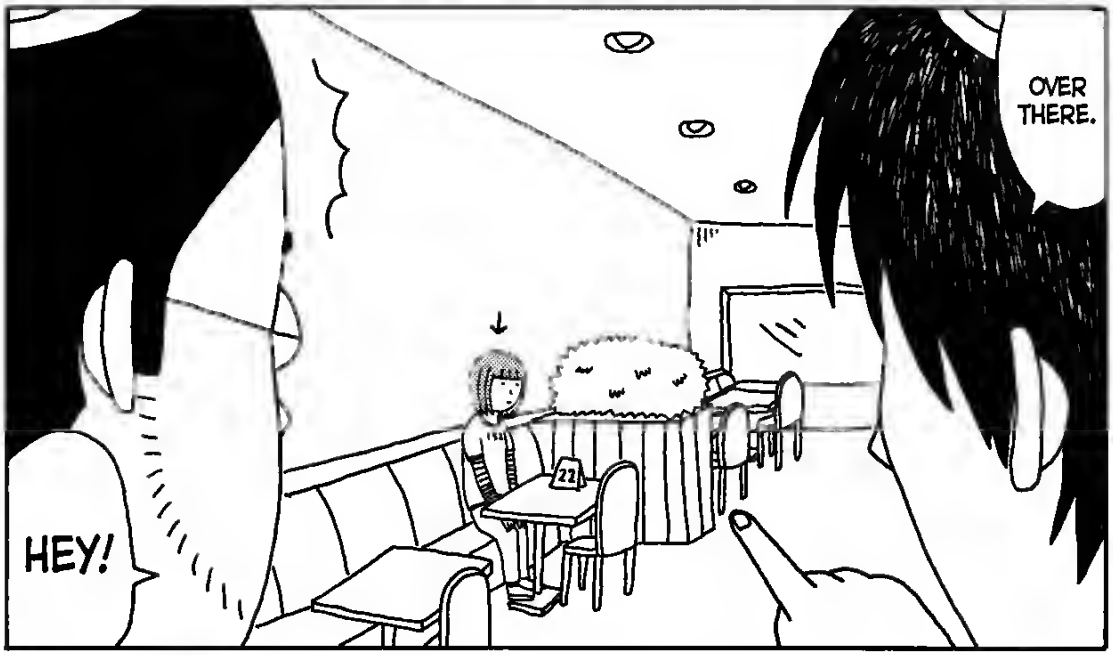
Extra:

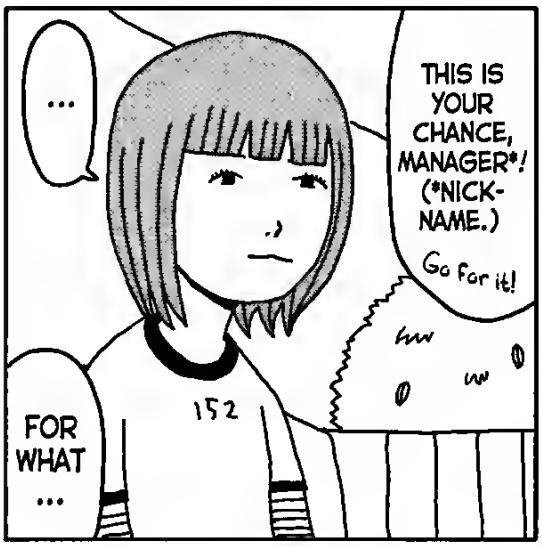
aiko comes to H Burgers

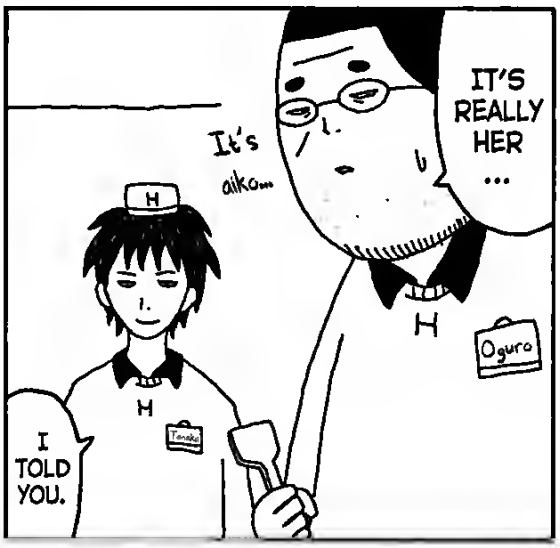


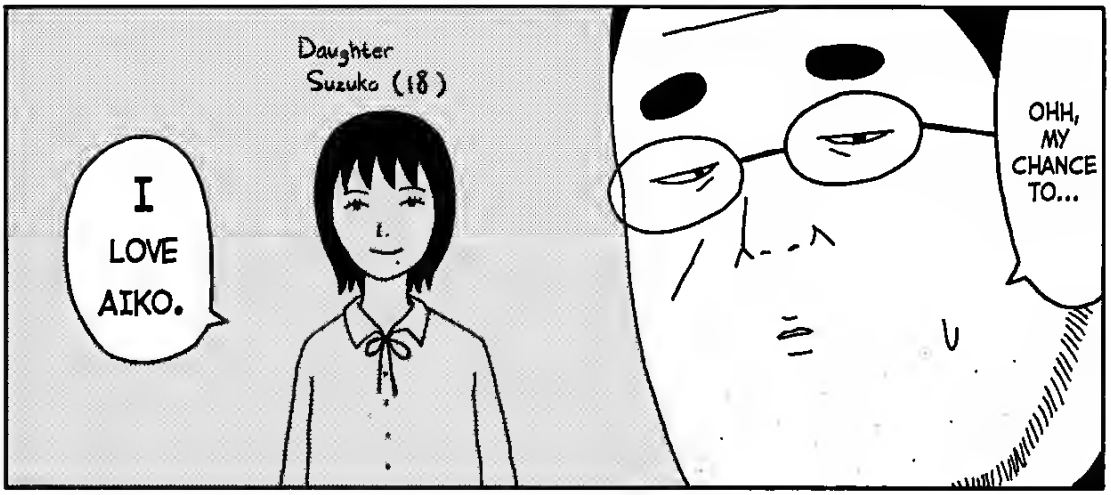


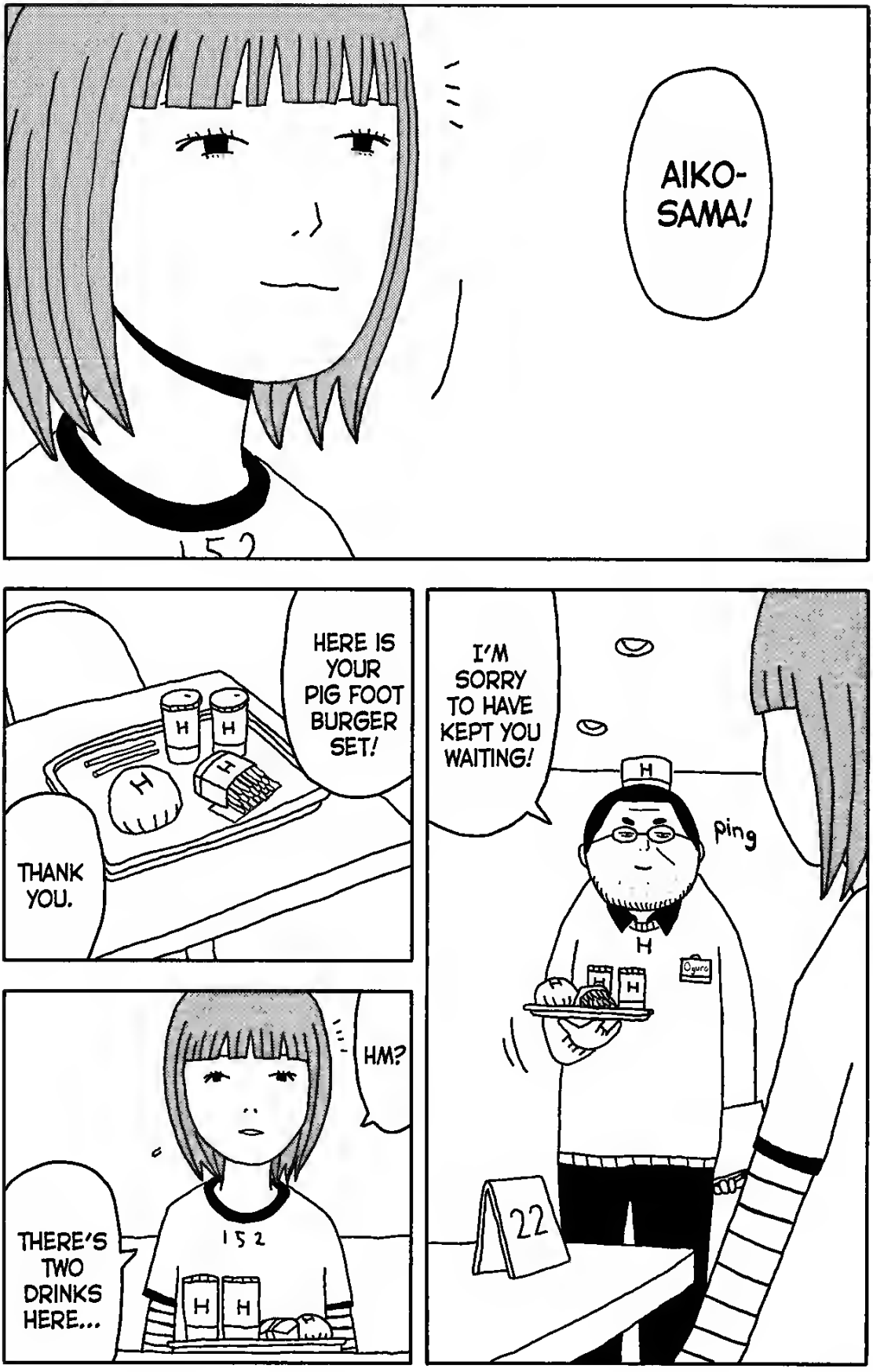

Part-timer at fast food restaurant.
Divorced father of teenage daughter.
...
Ogura
That's just a nick-name.
MANAGER! MANAGER!
turn
...
YOU'RE RIGHT, I DON'T BELIEVE YOU...
WHADDYA WANT, TANAKA ...?
YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS! AIKO JUST CAME IN, AS A CUSTOMER!
Tanaka

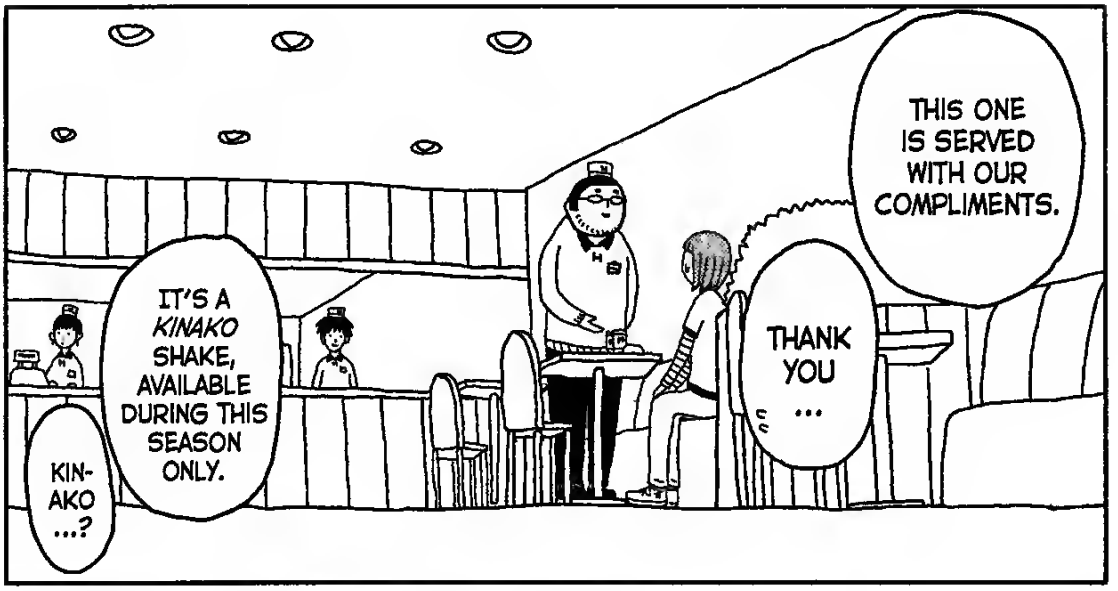

OVER THERE.
HEY!
22


...
THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, MANAGER*! (*NICK-NAME.)
Go for it!
FOR WHAT ...
152

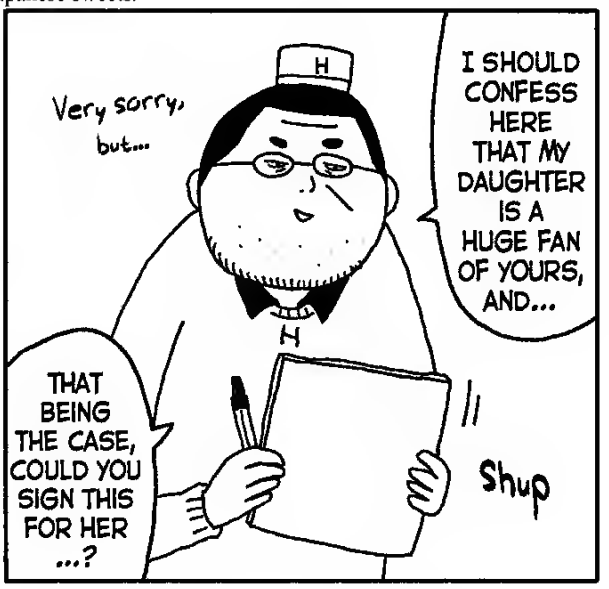

It's aiko...
IT'S REALLY HER ...
I TOLD YOU.
H
Oguro

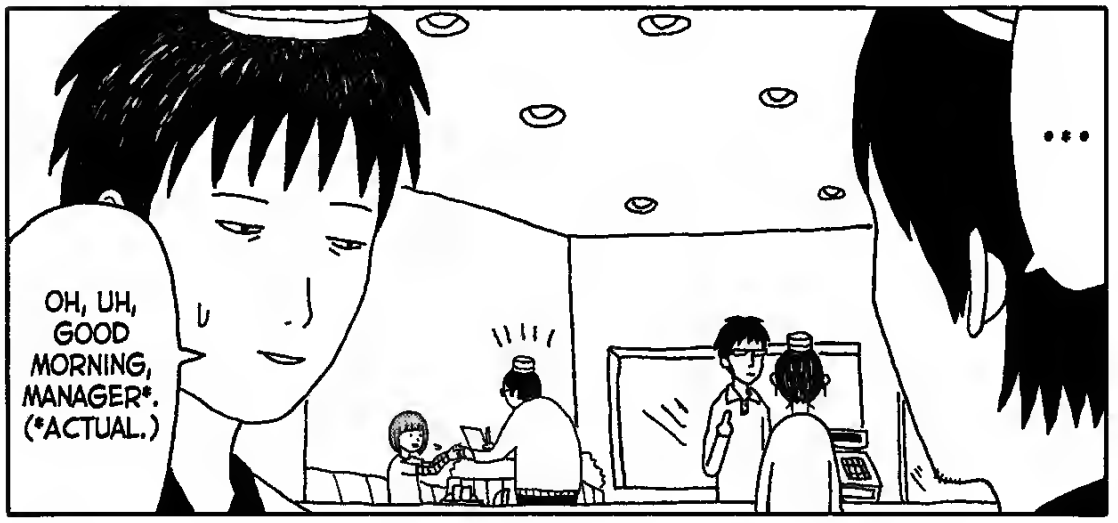

Daughter
Suzuko (18)
I LOVE AIKO.
OHH, MY CHANCE TO...


AIKO-SAMA!
HERE IS YOUR PIG FOOT BURGER SET!
THANK YOU.
I'M SORRY TO HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING!
ping
HM?
THERE'S TWO DRINKS HERE...
22

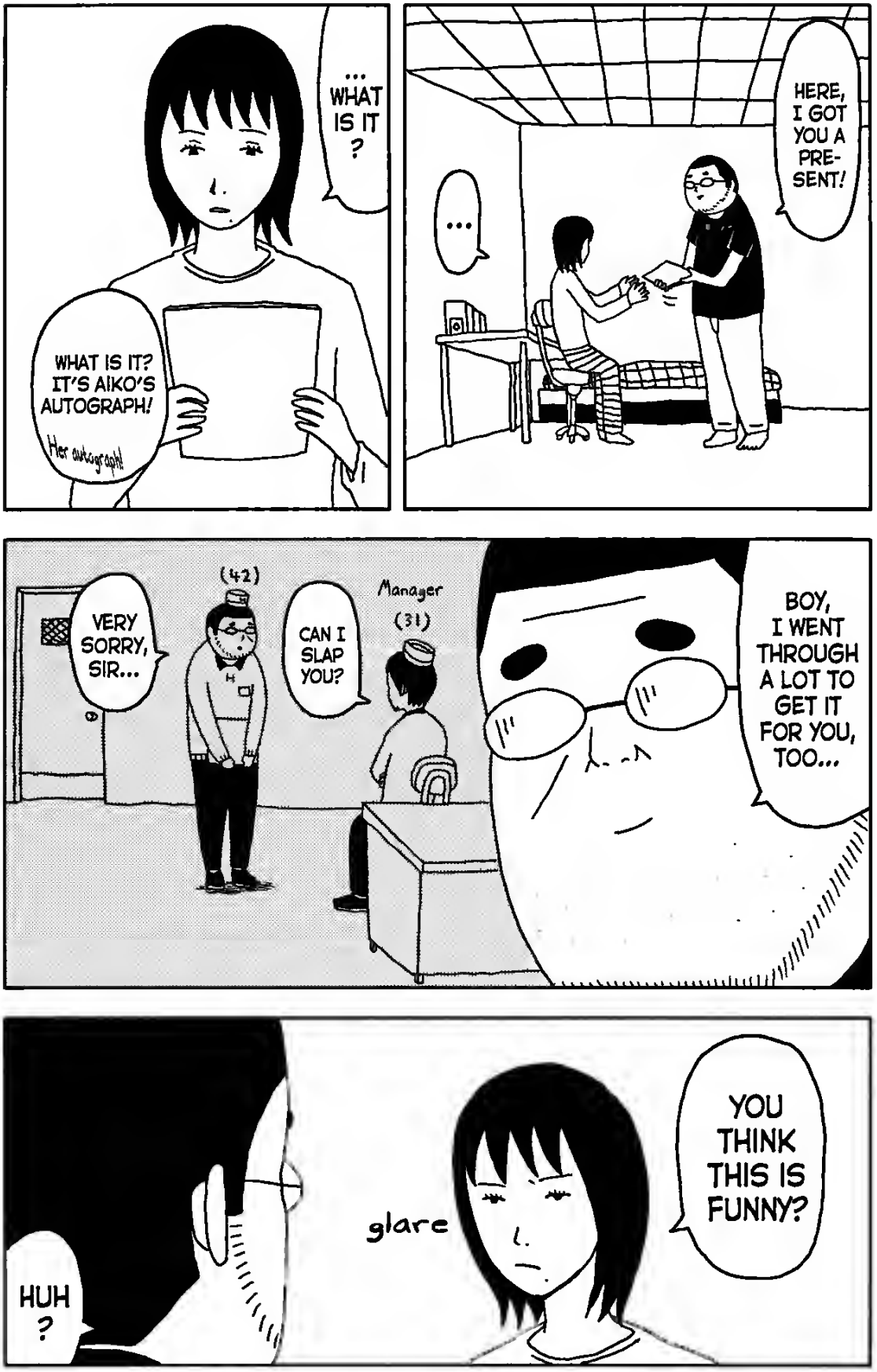


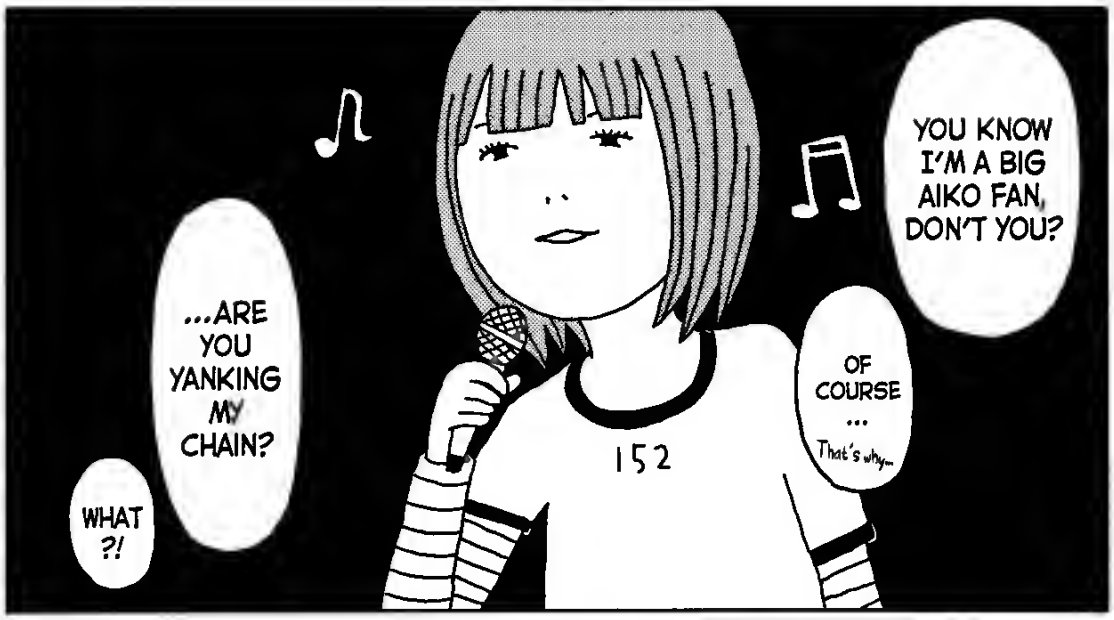
Kinako is ground roasted soybean, often sprinkled on Japanese sweets.

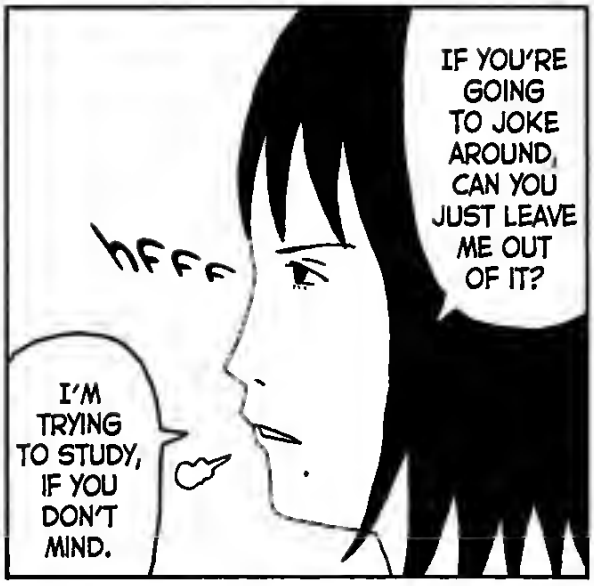

Very sorry, but...
I SHOULD CONFESS HERE THAT MY DAUGHTER IS A HUGE FAN OF YOURS, AND...
THAT BEING THE CASE, COULD YOU SIGN THIS FOR HER ...?
Shup

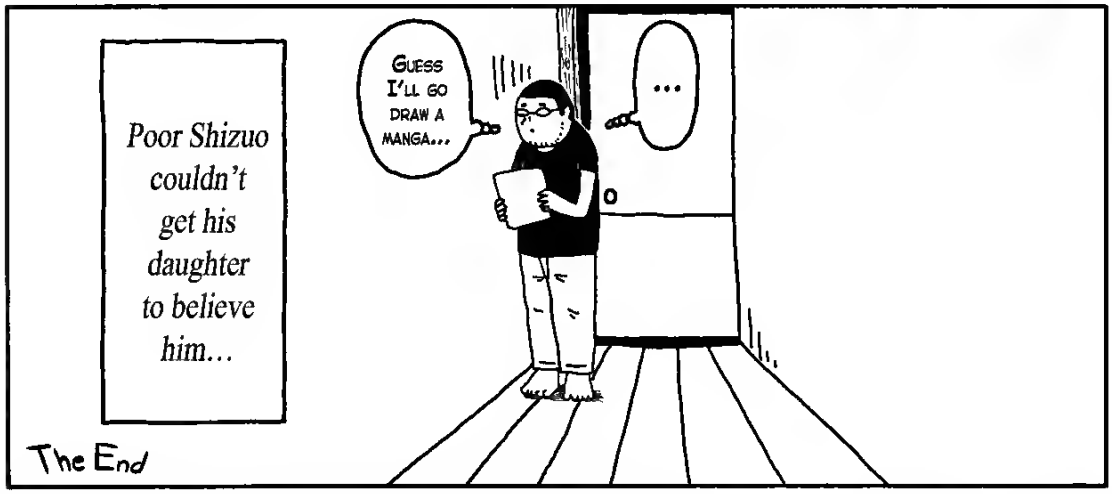


Suzuk chan
shup
Kinako shakes, yummy yum!!
bow wow
dog
xxx
...
TA-DAA-AH!


...
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT IS IT? IT'S AIKO'S AUTOGRAPH!
Her autograph!
...
HERE, I GOT YOU A PRE-SENT!
(42)
VERY SORRY, SIR...
CAN I SLAP YOU?
Manager (31)
BOY, I WENT THROUGH A LOT TO GET IT FOR YOU, TOO...
HUH?
glare
YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY?

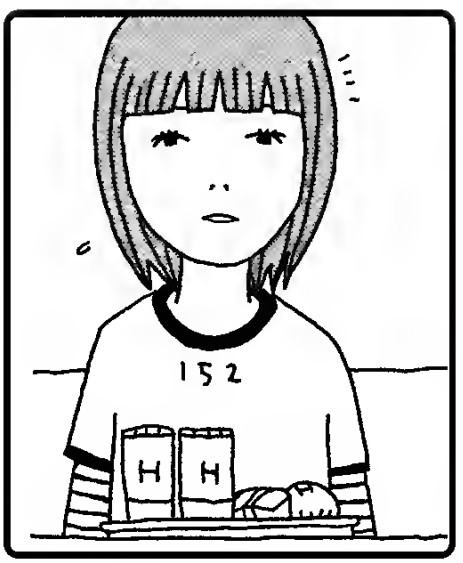






Rather than insist the autograph is genuine, back down to avoid daughter's ire: this was the wrenching decision that Shizuo Oguro, age 42, was forced to make.

Autograph cooperation: aiko



This bonus chapter was created for the tour pamphlet accompanying singer-songwriter aiko's concert tour, "Love Like Pop vol. 12."

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL...TOMORROW

Volume 4

VIZ Signature Edition

Story & Art by SHUNJU AONO

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